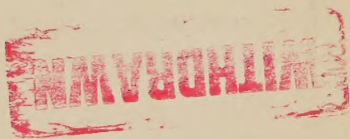




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Edited by

WILLIAM ROSE, M.A., PH.D.

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GOETHE

From a painting by Franz Gerhard von Kugelgen

GOETHE

By

J. G. Robertson

*Professor of German Language and Literature in
the University of London*

With a Portrait

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PREFACE

The biography of none of the great figures in the world's literature—either in whole or in part—has been so often written as that of Goethe. The materials are so vast on which to build, the avenues of approach so manifold, and the possibilities of new interpretation so luring. The end of a long period of patient investigation into the fact-basis of Goethe's life and work has been symbolised by the completion of the monumental Weimar edition of his writings ; and now philosophic minds, seeking to penetrate to what they call the "Goethe idea," are endeavouring to extract from the overwhelming mass of records a homogeneous conception of Goethe's personality and mentality ; others, putting aside the traditional eidola, born of hero-worship and national pride, are trying to present Goethe's life to us as he lived it, faithfully and dispassionately ; and again, the new science of psychology is leading to a revision of the old, simple method of interpreting the poet's work as a precipitate of his experience. And the question of the abiding validity of that work is always with us. Thus a new Goethe is emerging in our twentieth century ; there is still room for new books about him. Whether I may claim the privilege to contribute to this literature is more dubious : for I have so often, in one form or another, written on Goethe. The temptation to try once more to define the attitude of our time to him is my exoneration for the present little volume.

PREFACE

The portrait of Goethe which forms the frontispiece is not one that is generally familiar. It is a reproduction of that by Franz Gerhard von Kügelgen (painted in 1810), not of the original, but of a replica in the collection of Mrs Frida Mond, now in King's College, University of London. This particular replica seems to have been originally in the possession of Goethe himself. It has already been published in the *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, No. XIII (1911), and is reproduced here by the kind permission of the authorities of King's College.

J. G. ROBERTSON.

University of London.

GOETHE

Chapter One

EARLY YEARS

The biography of Goethe is in itself an epoch of European intellectual history. No man of our race "bestrode like a Colossus" so enormous a span of human development, a span the width of which is not to be measured in terms of years—although in this respect Goethe was favoured beyond the common lot—but by the epoch-making events and conflicts these years encompassed, by the kaleidoscopic changes they brought over the face of Europe. Goethe was born into the age of Frederick the Great; his boyhood felt the quiver of that pride of race with which the great king imbued, not merely his Prussians, but the German people; the best years of Goethe's manhood were passed amidst the elation and the disillusionment of the great Revolution; he watched the star of Napoleon rise and set; he was a witness of the Holy Alliance and the new Europe created by the Congress of Vienna; and before he died he saw France once more in the throes of a revolution. In its spiritual aspect the age was even more eventful. Goethe began life in the stagnant complacency of the epoch of Enlightenment; and his student years in Leipzig were as frivolous and inept as those of any *petit-maître*. But this period was hardly

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at an end, when he experienced the full brunt of the spiritual awakening that was ushered in by Rousseau ; and, indeed, he became the apostle of that awakening in Germany, and led it to a higher consummation than it reached in France itself. Yet Goethe was by no means a one-sided disciple of Rousseau ; he could never forget that he was at the same time the heir of the great classical eighteenth century, and for the first thirty years of his life, he had been the contemporary of Voltaire. The persistent dualism which runs through all Goethe's spiritual life—the “two souls within his breast”—might thus be regarded as a reflection of the dualism of the age in which he lived. And once his impetuous “Storm and Stress” was behind him, he set himself to hold the balance—and no man was ever a greater adept at holding balances than Goethe—between the rationalistic tradition and the new individualistic impulses. Goethe's later years, again, fall in the period when the constellation of German Romanticism was in the ascendancy ; he was the disapproving spectator of the triumph of the Romantic over the Classic ; but he lived long enough to see the fairy castles of the Romantic dreamers crumble to dust before, not a reviving Classicism, but a ruder realism than the eighteenth century had ever known, a realism grown arrogant under the advance of scientific discovery and the democratic industrialisation of the new Europe. The poet who in his young years had been nurtured on Rousseau, lived to hail in Byron the herald of the modern spirit. It was Goethe's misfortune that he had to pass his life in the retirement of a petty provincial court ; but this did not prevent him participating in the rich and varied intellectual life of his time : nothing that his contemporaries thought or did was uninteresting to him. Paris,

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London, Vienna he never saw ; Berlin he disliked ; but he had been for many months a citizen of what to him was the capital of the world, Rome ; and he stood face to face with Napoleon and received his homage.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe was born at Frankfort on the Main on August 28th, 1749. The constellations, he tells us, were favourable : " The sun stood in the sign of the Virgin, and had culminated for the day ; Jupiter and Venus had a friendly aspect, Mercury not an adverse one ; Saturn and Mars were neutral ; only the Moon, which was just full, exercised her counteracting power, the more so as her planetary hour had begun." Speculative critics have liked to justify this astrological fancy by showing us that Goethe came into the world at the precise moment which enabled him to carry out the mission with which Providence had entrusted him ; but it is idle to dwell on the fitness of any particular year for a great man's birth. Might not one with equal justice claim it as the prerogative of all great men to master the Time-spirit, and by making it subservient to their will, create the illusion of the fit moment ? It is a greater temptation to trace a higher purpose in the fact that this, the greatest and most representative of German poets, sprang, not from the north, and not from the south, but from the very heart of Germany, where north and south meet and mingle.

Goethe's ancestry has been traced back through several generations. His grandfather, on his father's side, had been a tailor and then an innkeeper in Frankfort ; but he was dead many years before the poet came into the world. His father, Johann Caspar Goethe, born in 1710, had had a legal training, and then visited Italy, of which country he cherished the happiest memories : the roomy and comfortable old house in the Grosse Hirschgraben was adorned

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with the pictures of Rome which he had brought back with him from his travels. But he was a disappointed man, his native town having refused him the preferment he felt entitled to, or, at least, refused to accept his services in the form he wished them accepted. He had, however, ample means—the innkeeping had prospered in its day—which made it unnecessary for him to practise his profession ; and in 1742 he acquired from the Emperor Charles VII the title of “kaiserlicher Rat” (Imperial Councillor) which gave him a social position in Frankfort with the best. He established still further his position by marrying Katharina Elisabeth Textor, daughter of the “Stadtschultheiss,” the highest judicial dignitary of the city. Goethe’s mother was little more than a girl—not quite seventeen—when she became the bride of Rat Goethe, more than twenty years her senior. The marriage was, of course, an arranged affair ; there was affluence on the one side and social position on the other. That there could be any real bond of sympathy between husband and wife was hardly to be expected ; but Frau Rat was one of those happy natures who are able to get full satisfaction out of life in any situation. The poet was their first-born ; and so difficult was his birth that it was something of a miracle that he lived at all. Five children followed, but of these four died in infancy ; and Wolfgang grew up in the sole companionship of a sister, Cornelia.

From parents so opposed in temperament and mentality—but are not such parental antitheses always an essential condition for the birth of a child of genius?—Goethe inherited that dualism of character which meets us at every turn of his life. From his father came staidness, method, balance—“des Lebens ernstes Führen”—and also that punctiliousness which, unfortunately, in later

life degenerated into a chilling stiffness which discouraged the younger generation ; while all that made Goethe the poet—imagination, sensitiveness, alacrity of spirit—came, as is usually the case with men of genius, from his mother. Young enough herself to be almost a child with her children, Frau Rat was, one feels, the right kind of mother for a poet. Her healthy naturalness and gay happy nature bathed her two children in sunshine ; and the stories young Wolfgang listened to at her knee, were the first stimulus of his imagination. From his mother Goethe received, indeed, his “Frohnatur,” his happy nature ; from her, too, came that inherent faith in the goodness of the world, tinged it may be, with a certain superstitious fatalism, which was to provide the foundation for the unfaltering optimism of her son’s mature years. Her letters, ungrammatical and badly spelled as they are, are a delight to read ; and one cannot but feel some resentment that Goethe should, in her later life, have so grudgingly repaid the debt he owed her. His visits to Frankfort were few and far between.

The education of the two children was the father’s affair ; and it lacked nothing in manysidedness and thoroughness ; but his methodical pedagogy was heavy-handed, Cornelia naturally suffering more under it than her brother, who in due time escaped to the university. As the children grew up, private tutors were engaged, but Rat Goethe did not give the reins out of his own hands ; he was determined that his son should not be contaminated by a public school education. Languages, Latin and Greek, French, Italian and English, to which was added, in the boy’s case, Hebrew, formed the main constituents of this schooling ; and Goethe tells us how, to sugar the pill of grammar, he himself invented a novel in which

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members of a family in various parts of the world wrote letters to each other in different tongues and styles. Looking back on his childhood, Goethe has, however, less to tell us of the knowledge he acquired than of the episodes of these early days which awakened and moulded his instinct for poetry. He recalls the Bible stories and fairy-tales his mother read to him ; and Bettina von Arnim—not, it is true, always a very creditable witness, but likely to be trustworthy here—records a charming scene which Frau Rat had described to her :

“ There I sat, and he devoured me with his large black eyes ; and when the fate of one of his favourites was not according to his mind, I saw the angry veins swell on his brow, and how he was repressing his tears. He often interrupted with : ‘ But, mother, the princess won’t marry the hateful tailor, even if he does kill the giant. . . . ’ When I guided the threads of fate according to his plan, and said to him : ‘ You have guessed rightly : that is how it happened,’ then he was all afire, and one could see his little heart beating underneath his collar. ’ ”

The deepest impression of all was made by a puppet-theatre, a present from his grandmother, which was shown to the children at the Christmas of the year in which Goethe had passed the age of six. Thus the boy grew up in pleasant surroundings ; his childhood was exceptionally happy ; he knew nothing of that lot of poverty which formed the stern school of the majority of German poets in the eighteenth century. His young mind unfolded graciously in the old patrician house with the wide view from its higher windows over the town and the fertile Main valley. The busy commercial life of Frankfurt—then a town of some 33,000 inhabitants—and its international fairs early gave him a glimpse of the great

world beyond ; the city was full enough of old monuments and memories to awaken his historical sense ; and the glittering pageant of an imperial coronation—that of Joseph II—in the old Frankfort “Römer”, made these historical memories a living and splendid reality. But there were shadows, too, on this fortunate childhood, although Goethe does not allow them to darken unduly the retrospect of his Autobiography. The child had more than his share of childish illnesses, and the campaign of Frederick the Great against Saxony and Austria, and their French allies, plunged Frankfort in the confusion of war, a confusion brought very near by the Battle of Bergen in the Easter week of 1759. The Goethe household was, moreover, divided against itself by this internecine conflict, his father being an ardent admirer of the Prussian king, while the sympathies of his mother and her family lay with Austria. For the child, who was on his father’s side, the war was, however, hardly a calamity. When the French occupied Frankfort, a Count Thoranc from Provence, “lieutenant du roy,” was quartered on the house in the Hirschgraben, and he, in spite of much irritating provocation on the part of the head of the house, acted with great consideration towards the family. An art connoisseur, Count Thoranc gathered round him the Frankfort painters, commissioning them to paint pictures for him. This made a lasting impression on young Wolfgang, in whom the count took a particular interest, and sowed the seeds of that love of art in him, which was never to desert him. The French brought, too, their theatre with them, to which Goethe, as the grandson of the “Stadtschultheiss,” had free access. Thus the enthusiast for Shakespeare of only a few years later, the poet of *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Faust*, absolved his

apprenticeship to the theatre of the alexandrine and the unities. At an early age religious questionings seem to have been a disturbing factor. He reminds us that he was just emerging into mental consciousness when the great Lisbon earthquake of 1755 upset the complacent deism of the eighteenth century, and sent a shudder through Europe. But perhaps in his retrospect he attaches too much importance to such things at this stage ; it is, at least, difficult to think of so young a child discovering the Rousseau-like solution to his religious difficulties which Goethe ascribes to himself.

These sunny Frankfort days ended in discord. The boy had found a circle of associates that were none too desirable. They led him into devious ways, besides taking advantage of his talent with his pen to help them to write their love-letters. Now, too, the god Eros, who was to lead Goethe so many a dance in the course of his long life, gave him an initiatory taste of his power. Goethe's first love, his Frankfort Gretchen, is dwelt on a little obviously in the Autobiography ; the old poet clearly liked to link up the object of this boyish passion with her immortal namesake in *Faust* ; it is even possible that *Dichtung und Wahrheit* may not be quite true here, and that Faust's Gretchen may have lent her name and more to the Frankfort episode which Goethe describes. This calf-love which did not get beyond the single kiss Gretchen one night at parting imprinted on his brow, was not a very serious affair ; and Gretchen's subsequent statement that she had never regarded him as anything but a child took time to live down. Wolfgang's interest in her came to light in an unpleasant way, for he had been induced to use his influence with his grandfather to obtain employment for one of her friends. This young man was subsequently

convicted of dishonest practices, and young Goethe only just escaped being compromised. The disconcerting ending to his boyhood was, however, soon forgotten, when he found himself a student in the metropolis of German culture, Leipzig. He would himself have preferred Göttingen ; but his father had studied at Leipzig, and to Leipzig Wolfgang had to go.

The biographer eagerly scans these early years for signs of the poet's awakening genius ; but they are scanty. Goethe tells us of several poetical undertakings ; and, no doubt, he early learned to use his pen. Besides the novel in different tongues already mentioned, we hear of an epic on the Bible story of Joseph, the supposed discovery of which created a passing flutter in recent years ; and Goethe himself gives us an example in his *Dichtung und Wahrheit* of the kind of fairy tale he liked to tell. As a student in Leipzig, however, he committed all his youthful efforts to the flames ; and nothing has been preserved but a bundle of school exercises, a couple of childish poems to his grandparents and an artificial and turgid ode, *Poetische Gedanken über die Höllenfahrt Jesu Christi* (*Poetic Thoughts on the Descent into Hell of Jesus Christ*). The obvious echoes of Klopstock in this ode recall to mind Goethe's amusing account in the Autobiography of how the *Messias* was smuggled into the Goethe household in defiance of Rat Goethe's antipathy to the new unrhymed poetry.

Not only does a new chapter open in Goethe's life, when he became a student at the University of Leipzig in the autumn of 1765 ; it is the beginning of a new Goethe. He did not take long to cast the skin of his provincial boorishness, to get rid of his home-made clothes which elegant Leipzig laughed at, and to adapt himself to the

artificial rococo of the "little Paris." It is, indeed, with difficulty that we recognise again the Frankfort boy in the powdered young dandy who strutted the Leipzig streets. Scandalised at the change that had come over him, one of his Frankfort friends wrote in the summer of 1766 : " Goethe is still the arrogant fantastic fellow he was when I came here. If you were only to see him, you would either rage with anger or have to split with laughing. I cannot see how a person can so quickly change himself. All his ways and his whole present behaviour are miles apart from his former ways. In his pride he is also a dandy, and all his clothes, fine as they are, are in such a grotesque *goût* that they make him conspicuous in the whole university. But this is all indifferent to him : one may point out his folly to him as much as one will." He tossed off graceful and for the most part vacuous anacreontics, in which the usual motives of wine-drinking and gallantry jingled to light music ; he school-mastered his sister in informative letters home, written sometimes in bad French and quite impossible English ; and in boyish fervour he clutched new friends to his heart, choosing by preference, as always in later life, antithetic natures, like the lanky, mocking Behrisch, some ten years older than himself, who, with his sword dangling at his side, cut an odd enough figure in the Leipzig streets. Goethe was much impressed by his first introduction to the academic world, and he began industriously enough ; but the ingenuousness with which he sought his professors' guidance about his studies, and, still more, his poetic ambitions, received little encouragement ; and the first term was not very far advanced when we find him writing home with superior sarcasm about the academic authorities ; for Gellert alone among his professors did he feel some

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warmth and respect. Lectures on jurisprudence or anything else did not, after the first few weeks, engage him very seriously ; in fact, his most engrossing interest in Leipzig was not the university, but the academy of art presided over by Adam Oeser ; he was more intent on learning to draw and etch than on acquiring book knowledge. For the Goethe that was to be, it was certainly more valuable that he should, with Oeser's help, have got a glimpse beyond the narrow Leipzig horizon into that promised land of a chaster classic beauty which Winkelmann had revealed, than that he should have become an adept in Justinian. His art interests were deepened and widened by a furtive visit to the Dresden gallery.

But there is no glossing it over : the Leipzig Goethe was a young rake, and was too much preoccupied by his initiation into " life " to have much time for study of any kind. Before long he had his " Märgen," a very different kind of affair from the shy calf-love of Frankfort. Her name was Anna or Annette Käthchen Schönpkopf, daughter of the host of the wine-house where Goethe took his midday meal. She was a lively little creature, three years older than Goethe, not over pretty, and probably less so than she might have been, in the unbecoming coiffure of the day, but with attractive manners. This coquettish personification of the Leipzig rococo was exactly the partner for the young elegant, the appropriate muse of his anacreontic trifling. There is a difficulty in gauging how much serious reality there was in his passion for Annette ; indeed, it is not easy with any of Goethe's loves, for one can never say how much Goethe's erotic fancies were inflamed by the actual person, and how much by a transfigured idea of her ; at all times, Goethe, as is

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the poet's way, let his imagination contribute more to his passions than they to his imagination. In this particular case it is difficult to disentangle the reality, for rococo love-making was largely flirtation and protestation ; a genuine note of passion, one feels, would have shattered the Dresden china ; in point of fact, this actually did happen. The lyrics which Annette inspired—only discovered and published as late as 1895—are too much concerned with Amor's ingenuity in circumventing coyness and with the other anacreontic conventions of the day, to reveal the truth. But if we turn to Goethe's letters, we see that his feelings did become more deeply involved than was required by the philandering spirit of the day. He took upon himself the blame that the course of his love did not run smoothly ; he tells us that he tormented Käthchen with jealousy ; but one cannot help suspecting that she, on her part, had a pleasure in teasing her young admirer, and was not so seriously anxious as he professed to be, that their love-making should be guided into the still waters of matrimony. Goethe's deeper nature was stirred ; he fell into fits of melancholy ; and the passion reverberated in him until long after Leipzig was a turned page in his life ; indeed, the sting still rankled when Käthchen ultimately, in 1770, gave her hand to a Dr. Kanne. Thus his Leipzig romance ended in that disillusionment to which all Goethe's serious love-affairs inevitably led. The process of disintegration was hardly different now from that of Goethe's later passions ; but he was still too young to understand that behind the disintegration was his subconscious self, dimly feeling its power, refusing to let itself be fettered, and urging safety in flight.

The pin-pricks of this love that would not run smoothly

have left their mark on Goethe's comedy, *Die Laune des Verliebten* (*The Lover's Whims*), a still readable little play in well-turned alexandrines, which had possibly in some form been already planned before Goethe came to the university at all. It is in the conventional pastoral mould, and is Goethe's tribute to the *genius loci* of Leipzig, his contribution to the Saxon comedy of would-be French elegance. A more significant reflection of Goethe's emotional distraughtness is to be read out of another piece written at this time, *Die Mitschuldigen* (*The Fellow-Culprits*) even if it is not so intimately a reproduction of its author's experiences. *Die Mitschuldigen* is an enigmatic and unpleasant play ; the young poet did not himself seem sure whether it ought to have a tragedy or a comedy ending. And if it does cynically condone trespasses which poetic justice clearly demanded should be taken tragically, the inference seems to be that Goethe had been drawn in Leipzig into waters that were too deep for him ; his moral convictions had been shaken and unsettled. These dramatic essays, to which must be added the lost plan of an ambitious five-act tragedy, *Belsazar*, are not, however, to be taken very seriously, and, as we have seen, his lyric beginnings, however sympathetically we may view them, show little promise of what was to come. Indeed, much the most pleasing products of Goethe's pen in these student days are the vivacious letters he wrote to his home and friends ; there is a truer ring of genius here than in his poetry. Goethe's literary horizon in Leipzig was definitely bounded by the rococo. Wieland, among his contemporaries, stood highest in favour ; and his ambition now, and until he went to Strassburg, was to follow in that poet's footsteps. Lessing, on the other hand, did not interest him sufficiently to induce him to seize the

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one opportunity life ever gave him of meeting face to face the greatest and manliest of his predecessors. Still, we must not make too much of these things. And it has not to be forgotten that Shakespeare—even if only through the medium of Dodd's *Beauties of Shakespeare*—was already familiar to him as a Leipzig student, far as he still was from finding the key that was to unlock for him Shakespeare's heart.

Goethe's first student years came to a sudden and unforeseen end. He paid the penalty of his youthful libertinism—and possibly also of the rigorous treatment to which he subjected himself as a counterbalance to his excesses—with serious illness, the rupture of a blood vessel in the lung. He woke up one morning with his mouth full of blood, and many weeks elapsed before, on his nineteenth birthday, he was sufficiently recovered to venture on the journey home.

As we look back on this period of Goethe's life, the most urgent thought that presses on us is that he—the great European Goethe—should have passed his first apprenticeship to life and poetry in the stuffy atmosphere of provincial Leipzig, and in the leading-strings of an artificial rococo taste. It is tempting to find irony rather than purpose in such a beginning for a poet who had the rôle to play in the world that Goethe played. On the other hand, his initiation into poetry, such as it was, lengthens out the span of his life enormously : his literary activity is linked up with the pastoral and pseudo-classic poetry of the century before him, indeed, with the very beginnings of our modern literature. The poet who was to put its final stamp on that classicism in modern literature which was initiated by the Renaissance, himself passed, like the embryo, through all its developmental phases. Leipzig

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provided the stimulus and the starting point for his first positive mission in his nation's poetry. This was to discredit the mincing artificiality with which the German muse had been tripping it for generations, and to lead her back to sincerity and truth.

Chapter Two

STRASSBURG

Goethe's father had little enough reason to be satisfied with his son's progress at the University of Leipzig. It was clear that Wolfgang had not made much effort to prepare himself for that legal career which the stern old disciplinarian had mapped out for him. But the boy came home an invalid, and there were probably no serious recriminations. Mother and sister, of course, welcomed him effusively. His recovery progressed, and he spent his time mainly in drawing and etching. He did not take kindly to his native town after the motley freedom he had enjoyed in Leipzig, and in correspondence with the Leipzig friends he endeavoured to retain something of the old rapture. His love for Käthchen was still his engrossing preoccupation ; he wrote once a month to her and sent her little presents. In December, however, his recovery had a serious check ; a recrudescence of the lung trouble set in, apparently aggravated by the fumes of the acids he had been using for his etching. His life was this time almost despaired of, but his mother drew consolation from the text at which she opened her Bible : "Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria : the planters shall plant and [in the Lutheran text] play the pipe." The timely administration of an alchemistic salt behind the physician's back brought miraculous relief, thus strengthening still further his mother's confidence in the

Providence that watched over him. Recovery was slow, and all through the spring months of 1769 he was more of an invalid than he had been in the weeks following his return from Leipzig.

This, Goethe's twentieth year was, a crucial year in his development, although it receives but scant consideration in the Autobiography ; life was shaping itself earnestly for him. Leipzig with its light-hearted frivolity and gallantry, was receding into the past. He still clung to his love for Kätchen, but he had the instinctive feeling—even before he had knowledge, in May, of her formal betrothal—that she had to be forgotten. This was a very disrupting thought : his first experience of that " *Entsagung* " which so often and in so many guises was to throw its shadow across his life. Abysses of despair yawned before the young poet, who but a year or two earlier, had been making his first experiments in poetry by commuting his light-hearted dance of life into the alexandrines of *Die Laune des Verliebten*, in the poetry to " Annette," and the *Neue Lieder*, which appeared—Goethe's first published work—in the autumn of 1759, with his friend Breitkopf's music. Chameleon-like, as so often in the crises of his life, Goethe assumed a new colour ; haunted by upsetting presentiments, he found refuge in that pietism, which has always been present in German hearts beneath the veneer of rationalism or materialism. Into this atmosphere of religious brooding he was initiated by Susanna von Klettenberg, a relative of his mother's who was associated with the Moravian Brethren ; and in communion with this " beautiful soul "—for it was she Goethe had in mind when he wrote the sixth book of his *Wilhelm Meister*—Goethe turned away from the glittering surface of things and probed the

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depths. Through pietism he found his way back to the headsprings of German mysticism in the works of Helmont and Paracelsus ; he studied the *Aurea Catena Homeri* and that dreary folio of pietistic heterodoxy, Arnold's *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzergeschichte* ; he made the acquaintance of the great Swedish mystic of his own time, Emanuel Swedenborg. With the help of Welling's *Opus Mago-Cabbalisticum* and Boerhaave's *Elementa Chemiae*, he acquired, too, a knowledge of chemistry, then, of course, still largely alchemy ; a furnace and retort were erected in his little attic, and his days and nights were spent in experimenting—all this, no doubt, with but little approval from his father. A more complete conversion and metamorphosis of the young anacreontic rhymer it would be difficult to imagine ; but one could not have a better testimony to the elasticity of his temperament and his capacity for spiritual growth. In those days and nights Goethe must have thought many searching thoughts, poring over the mysteries of matter and spirit amidst his books, retorts and crucibles, seeking to discover :

“ was die Welt
Im Innersten zusammenhält.”

We have no documents of these spiritual wrestlings, for the young poet did not so easily find utterance for his thoughts ; and his letters of the time are inclined to veil them in humour and irony. But there is little doubt that Goethe, wrestling with the dark powers in these months of convalescence in Frankfort, experienced the first of the great spiritual crises which punctuated his life.

When health ultimately did return, the practical question had to be faced : what next ? Rat Goethe again

took control, and decided that his son should complete his professional training in France, at the academy of Strassburg, and afterwards acquire a final polish in Paris. These plans were the more welcome to Goethe, as the dreaded date of Käthchen's wedding approached. He could not bring himself to congratulate her, or to provide the epithalamium she wished him to write for her ; and when the marriage was postponed until Easter, he still clung to the hope that she might be his after all. Yet he writes to her asking her to break off the correspondence : " It is a sad request, my best one, the only one of your sex I may not call friend." And in his last letter of January 1770, in which he tells her of his plans of going abroad, there is an underlying note of finality : " You are and always have been the loveable girl, and you will also be the loveable wife. And I—I shall still be Goethe. You know what that means. When I name myself, I name all of myself, and you know that, ever since I saw you, I have been only a part of you."

No city, except Rome, meant so much for Goethe as Strassburg, this old Alemannic focus of spiritual light which has contributed more to the culture of the German race than any other of its centres. Here his crisis found its solution ; here the meaning of the days of brooding in Frankfort became clearer. His delight in Alsace—unexpected, perhaps, in one who came from the more picturesque Main valley—was unbounded ; and no land, except Italy, was flooded with brighter sunshine in his memory. Again we are tempted to dwell on the chameleon in Goethe. Could there be a greater contrast than the young rococo dandy of Leipzig and the serious, handsome youth, who, in the spring of 1770, rode across the Rhine bridge into Strassburg ? Only the eyes—those wonderful eyes

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into which no one, man or woman, could ever look and forget—were the same.

Goethe arrived on the 2nd of April ; he took rooms in the Fischmarkt under the shadow of the cathedral, and he dined at the house of two maiden ladies called Lauth, who provided a midday meal for paying guests in the Knoblauchsgasse. This company was presided over by a Strassburg actuary, Salzmann, the oldest of the circle ; and Salzmann took a particular interest in Goethe, introducing him to his friends and enlisting his co-operation in a literary society. Goethe soon slipped into easy intimacy with his fellow-diners, who were mostly medical students ; of these Lerse and a theologian, Wayland, became his particular friends. Later, Heinrich Jung-Stilling, that extraordinary product of German pietism, joined the company ; still later, the poet Lenz came to Strassburg and attached himself with embarrassing affection to Goethe. Goethe devoted himself more seriously to his legal studies than in Leipzig ; for a practical end had to be achieved ; and he even succeeded in discovering that jurisprudence had its attractive sides. But he also found time to dabble in medical studies, and his Frankfort interest in chemistry was not forgotten. Pietism visibly lost its hold over him. A note-book of this time, which he labelled *Ephemerides*, has been preserved, and bears witness to a quite extraordinary range of reading. On holiday rides through Alsace and Lorraine—to the Odilienberg and to Saarbrücken—he widened his knowledge of the land and its people.

In Strassburg Goethe discovered his genius and found his soul. Affectionately as he has in his Autobiography dwelt on all that that city meant to him, we cannot but regret that just here so much calm and mellow retrospect

has crept into its pages. There was surely more unrest and more impatience of authority in the Strassburg Goethe than Goethe, the elderly chronicler, would have us believe ; his letters and poetry reveal, indeed, a very different Goethe. That his rebellious spirit was led into productive channels was almost entirely due to the influence on him of the pioneer of the new outlook on life and poetry, associated with the "Storm and Stress," Johann Friedrich Herder. It was, indeed, a memorable moment, not only in Goethe's life, but in the intellectual history of the German people, when these two young men met on the stairs of the old Strassburg inn, "Zum Geist." Goethe was twenty-one, Herder twenty-six. Well might Goethe see in it as in so much else in his wonderful life, the hand of a "divinity that shapes our ends." Herder was then only known to the young poet as the author of the *Kritische Wälder*—the *Fragmente über die deutsche Literatur* he did not read until later—but this was enough. He was hungering for new spiritual food ; and Herder, as no other of his contemporaries, had this food to give him ; Goethe welcomed him with open arms.

Herder had come to Strassburg as travelling tutor to the young prince of Holstein-Glottorp ; but on the way thither, in Darmstadt, he had met his future wife, Caroline Flachsland, and had been offered a fixed position by the Prince-Bishop of Bückeburg. Thus he was not unwilling to find an excuse for resigning his tutorship ; and he took advantage of his stay in Strassburg to undergo an operation for a stoppage in the lachrymal duct of the eye. The treatment was long and tedious, and in the end, ineffectual, but one part of the cure was that he was obliged to spend his days in a darkened room ; and here Goethe often bore him company.

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From Herder Goethe received in their long intimate talks the foundations on which the first and most prolific epoch of his literary life was reared. Herder expounded to him his inspiring conception of human evolution ; taught him to see the beginnings of our race in primitive poetry, especially in the Hebrew literature of the Bible ; showed him the virile strength in the medieval past of his own people. He opened his eyes to the beauty of Homer and Ossian ; and he revived Goethe's early interest in Klopstock. Most significant of all, he revealed to him the greatness of Shakespeare. Before this master of the northern soul Goethe felt like his Faust writhing before the Earth Spirit. Later, after his return to Frankfort, he put what that revelation meant to him into words :

“ Do not expect me to write much or to write sedately ; tranquillity of soul is no garment for a festival ; and even still I have thought little about Shakespeare ; to divine him, feel him in great passages, is the highest to which I have been able to attain. The first page I read in him, made me his for life, and when I had reached the end of the first play, I stood like one born blind, on whom in a moment a miraculous hand has bestowed sight. I recognised, I felt most intensely, that my being had been infinitely widened ; everything was new to me, unknown, and the unwonted light gave me pain in my eyes. Gradually I learned to see, and, thanks to my receptive nature, I still feel intensely how much I have gained.”

The break with the rococo was complete ; French literature filled him with aversion, and Wieland was a broken idol. Herder showed him, too, that the eternal spring of poetry was not to be found in dusty compendiums of literary rules, still less in dainty, gilt-edged volumes of drawing-room poetry, but in the heart of the people. A

handful of simple Volkslieder vanquished for ever the jingling anacreontic insincerities in Goethe's own poetry, and in that of his country. At the Volkslied his own matchless lyric genius was kindled ; and with Herder's encouragement he set about collecting songs from the lips of the Alsatian peasants. Goethe's own remoulding of such poetry, as in his splendid *Heidenröslein*, shows the hand of a master :

“ Sah ein Knab' ein Röslein stehn,
 Röslein auf der Heiden,
 War so jung und morgenschön,
 Lief er schnell es nah zu sehn,
 Sah's mit vielen Freuden.
 Röslein, Röslein, Röslein rot,
 Röslein auf der Heiden.”

And as the background to this quivering excitement towered—in its Gothic beauty a symbol and an inspiration—the great Strassburg Minster of Erwin von Steinbach. For Goethe this noble pile was the very incarnation of the Germanic soul.

Can one wonder that the young poet was dazzled by the light that broke over him in Strassburg ? No later experience of Goethe's life created so revolutionary a turmoil within him. Intoxicated, carried off his feet, it would, indeed, have not been surprising had he lost his balance altogether ; he might have raged and rollicked, as so many a “ Stürmer and Dränger ” of these days and the aftertime, glowing with the new wine of freedom, overwhelmed by the genius of Shakespeare and the fermenting yeast of Rousseau, and—ended in mere empty sound and fury. But Herder acted not merely as a stimulus ; he was also a corrective, a brake on the wheel. He had

something in him of a Swift or a Mephistopheles, and Goethe stood in awe of his sharp tongue. Still more, there came to Goethe's aid that mental equilibrium which never deserted him in the crises of his life. This was what enabled him, almost alone of his generation, to make the "Storm and Stress" a positive and productive factor in his country's literature.

Such were the intellectual forces which were rapidly moulding Goethe into a poet. But before the metamorphosis of the Leipzig gallant was complete, his emotional nature had to experience another upheaval. Goethe's Strassburg love, Friederike Brion, supplemented the intellectual revolution in him which Herder had initiated. As befitted the new world he had entered, Friederike was no coquette versed in the allures of the rococo, but a simple country girl of unassuming manners, of no great education, but with a great well of sentiment waiting to be tapped. She was the second eldest of the unmarried daughters of the pastor of Sesenheim, a village lying some twenty miles to the north of Strassburg. Goethe had been introduced to the family by his friend Wayland, who was related to them; and as a youthful joke he had himself, on the first visit, introduced to them as a poor dependant. This was in October, 1770. The delightful vignette of this meeting in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* bears witness to the vividness of Goethe's memory, even if it be retouched with the mature art that has given us Hermann's Dorothea:

"At this instant she actually appeared at the door; and then indeed, a lovely star arose in this rural firmament. Both daughters still wore German dress, as it was then called, and this almost obsolete national costume became Friederike particularly well. A short, white full skirt,

with a flounce, not too long to reveal the neatest little feet and ankles ; a tight white bodice and a black taffeta apron—thus she stood on the boundary between town and peasant girl. Slender and light, she tripped along with buoyant step, and her neck seemed almost too delicate to bear the weight of the thick, fair plaits on the neat little head. The look of her merry, cheerful blue eyes was frank and free, and her pretty turned-up nose peered as freely into the air as if there could be no care in the world ; her straw hat hung on her arm, and thus, at the first glance, I had the delight of seeing and appreciating her at once in her full grace and loveliness.”

A couple of days after his return he needs must write to her telling her of his regrets at parting from her. The actual letter we do not possess, Friederike’s sister having destroyed all that Goethe wrote to her ; but we have Goethe’s rough draft of it. He began :

“ Dear New Friend,

“ I do not hesitate a moment to call you so ; for if I know anything at all about eyes, then mine read at the first glance the hope of this friendship in yours ; and for our hearts I would swear. You, gentle and good as I know you are, must not be just a little bit kindly in return to me who love you so ? ”

And then, thinking better of it, he began over again :

“ Dear, Dear Friend,

“ Whether I have anything to say to you or not does not come into question ; but whether I just know why I am actually writing to you and what I would like to say,

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that is another thing. This much I perceive in a certain inward restlessness : that I should very much like to be with you ; and in that case a little scrap of paper is a true consolation, a winged horse for me here in the midst of this noisy Strassburg—as it may also be for you in your quiet, if you really feel the parting from your friends. . . . You would not believe that the bustle of the town, contrasted with your sweet country joys, could be distasteful to me. In truth, Mamsell, Strassburg never seemed so empty to me as it does now. I hope, indeed, it will be better when time has dimmed a little the remembrance of our pleasant little amusements, when I no longer feel so much how good and charming a friend I have. Yet could I or would I forget that ? No, I will rather keep my little heartache and write often to you.”

Repeated visits to Sesenheim during the winter ripened the intimacy, without, it would appear, awakening any misgivings in Friederike’s parents ; and with the coming of the spring Goethe’s new passion reached its zenith. Then in summer Friederike fell ill, and Goethe spent several weeks at the parsonage, partly in happy dalliance, but partly also troubled, as may be read in and between the lines of a few letters to his friend Salzmann, by thoughts of the future. The inevitable rift in the lute had begun to show itself. Never in the course of his long life was love to mean to Goethe more than a fleeting happiness, to be more than a poppy flower that he had but to grasp and the bloom was shed. The inevitable end approached, and more swiftly than it had come in Leipzig. On June 20th they parted. As from his horse he gave her his hand, “ tears stood in her eyes and I, too, was deeply unhappy.” And the letter from her which he received in

reply to one of his, rent his heart ; it was "written in a moment when it almost cost her her life." Such was the course of the most moving of all Goethe's love experiences. To Friederike it was indeed a tragedy ; perhaps a deeper tragedy than, on our slight evidence, we have any right to hint. In the old sentimental phrase, it broke her heart ; and the sting of the parting rankled in Goethe for years after his flight.

The story of Goethe and Friederike in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* has always been regarded as a pearl of Goethe's prose, one of the beautiful love stories of literature. And yet there is perhaps no episode in Goethe's retrospect of forty years, where the "truth" is more suffused with clarifying "poetry" than just this. He frames it, for instance, in an ingratiating literary analogy with *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Goethe did not know Goldsmith's story when he first saw Friederike, but even if he had known it, I doubt whether the impetuous, unreflective passion which she stirred in him would have been patient of so sedate a parallel. Moreover, to fit the Sesenheim family into the literary picture he had to do some violence to the facts ; he has no room for Friederike's third sister ; and he deliberately heightens the beginning of the romance by transferring it to the spring-time. But it is the placidity of the retrospect, beautiful as it is, that is the greatest sin against the truth : it was not thus that the Strassburg Goethe loved. The best of proofs is the handful of wonderful lyrics Friederike inspired, lyrics in which the artificialities of Goethe's earlier poetry fade completely before the onrush of an emotional sincerity that knew nothing of literary conventions. The truth of Goethe's passion is enshrined, not in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, but in undying poems like *Willkommen*

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und Abschied (I quote these strophes in their earliest form) :

“ Es schlug mein Herz, geschwind zu Pferde,
Und fort, wild, wie ein Held zur Schlacht !
Der Abend wiegte schon die Erde,
Und an den Bergen hing die Nacht.
Schon stund im Nebelkleid die Eiche
Wie ein getürmter Riese da,
Wo Finsternis aus dem Gesträuche
Mit hundert schwarzen Augen sah.

“ Der Mond von einem Wolkenhügel
Sah schläfrig aus dem Duft hervor ;
Die Winde schwangen leise Flügel,
Umsausten schauerlich mein Ohr.
Die Nacht schuf tausend Ungeheuer—
Doch tausendfacher war mein Mut.
In meinen Adern welches Feuer !
In meinem Herzen welche Glut !

“ Der Abschied, wie bedrängt, wie trübe !
Aus deinen Blicken sprach dein Herz :
In deinen Küssen welche Liebe !
O, welche Wonne, welcher Schmerz !
Du gingst, ich stund und sah zur Erden,
Und sah dir nach mit nassem Blick.
Und doch, welch Glück, geliebt zu werden !
Und lieben, Götter, welch ein Glück ! ”

And the splendid *Mailed* :

“ Wie herrlich leuchtet
Mir die Natur !
Wie glänzt die Sonne !
Wie lacht die Flur !

- “ Es dringen Blüten
 Aus jedem Zweig,
 Und tausend Stimmen
 Aus dem Gesträuch,
- “ Und Freud' und Wonne
 Aus jeder Brust.
 O Erd', o Sonne !
 O Glück, o Lust !
- “ O Lieb', o Liebe !
 So golden schön,
 Wie Morgenwolken
 Auf jenen Höhn !
- “ Du segnest herrlich
 Das frische Feld,
 Im Blütendampfe
 Die volle Welt.
- “ O Mädchen, Mädchen,
 Wie lieb' ich dich !
 Wie blickt dein Auge !
 Wie liebst du mich ! ”

Dichtung und Wahrheit attempts to explain and exonerate the young poet's break with Friederike. We are told there how it was only necessary for her to pay a visit to Strassburg for her to stand stripped of her magic, to appear the mere peasant girl she was. It brought home to Goethe that his castle was only built on sand ; the patrician home in Frankfort rose up before his eyes, his unbending father, who had already unpleasantly enough let him feel the weight of his authority. No doubt these

thoughts did pass through the young man's mind ; but perhaps Goethe in later life gave undue prominence to them. Was there, after all, any reason why Friederike should have been a bride less acceptable at home than the daughter of a Leipzig victualler ? And Goethe had once seriously enough thought of braving his father and marrying K  thchen. Moreover, his professional education was now approaching its end, and there was every reason to believe that a short time would see him established and independent in his native town. Behind Goethe's faithlessness lay rather, now as in Leipzig, the vaguely understood, but imperative demand of his genius for freedom. The guardian angel, whose hand Goethe saw watching over him at all the turning-points of his life, stepped in and barred the way ; insisted once more on that renunciation which was for Goethe always the key to the effective life. This was the real exoneration, and the only exoneration that mattered. In his *Autobiography* he tells us how he entertained the Sesenheim sisters by telling them the fairy-tale of *Die neue Melusina*, which he ultimately incorporated in one of his very last works, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*. Very likely this episode is only "Dichtung" and not "Wahrheit"—but it is "Dichtung" with a moral ; for *Die neue Melusina* is the story of a young man who, to win a dwarf king's daughter, must himself become a dwarf ; finally he breaks the ring that binds him under the spell ; regains his true form and his freedom. Friederike was Goethe's Melusina.

Goethe's biographers are perhaps inclined to attach undue importance to Friederike's share in the poetic creations of his next few years. It is doubtful, indeed, if she may be regarded, in any literal sense, as the model

for the Maries of his *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Clavigo* ; the process of Goethe's transmutation of the reality into poetry was not, even in his young days, the simple thing we used to think it was. An experience had to pass through many stages and subtle metamorphoses before it became the "great confession" of imaginative creation ; and in the end the emotional experience, as often as not, ceases to be recognisable. Such was the case with Goethe's love for Friederike Brion. It is enough that when the breach came, the young poet once more passed into the outer darkness, now more difficult to bear than when he left Käthchen Schönkopf in Leipzig ; for the responsibility for all the unhappiness lay this time, he felt, on his shoulders alone. Remorse mingled with the bitterness ; and it was this remorse, not herself, that Friederike contributed to her lover's imaginative creations. From the darkness Goethe emerged a deeper and a greater poet ; and at the same time his confidence in his guiding genius was strengthened.

In the last Strassburg months Goethe was busy with many poetic plans. He contemplated writing a drama of Julius Caesar ; and, if we are to believe *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, the Swabian robber-knight Gottfried von Berlichingen had already attracted him as "a well-meaning self-helper in a wild anarchic time." Faust, too, early familiar to him from the grotesque associations of Auerbach's wine-cellar in Leipzig, and again from his own Faust-like studies and broodings during his Frankfort convalescence, began in Strassburg to grip his imagination in earnest. The Faust motive, as it first shaped itself had, however, few points of contact with his love for Friederike, but was probably mainly concerned with his own disgust with academic routine and pedantry.

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His first impulse was to make it a satire on the dull learning of the schools. "I too had wandered amidst all learning, and early enough its vanity had been brought home to me. I, too, had experimented with life in many ways, and had always returned more unsatisfied and tormented." It was in this form—a ringing of the changes on the lines :

"Grau, teurer Freund, ist alle Theorie,
Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum——"

that the saga of the wonder-working magician, which was never again to leave him, first emerged.

Goethe had hoped to obtain the doctor's degree from Strassburg; but either his thesis was not regarded as adequate, or, more probably, was not sufficiently orthodox—we only know that the two first words of its title were "De legislatoribus"—and he was not permitted to dispute it. Instead, he presented fifty-six "Positiones juris," the successful defence of which gave him his licentiate. The disputation took place on August 6th, and his friend Lersé, whom one can hardly think of as very formidable in this capacity, was his opponent. So ended Goethe's university years. He returned home by way of Mannheim, where the collection of models of antique sculpture awakened a very lively interest in him. Before the end of August he was again in Frankfort.

Chapter Three

FRANKFORT AND WETZLAR

The period that lay between Goethe's return from Strassburg and his departure for Weimar in the autumn of 1775 is, for the biographer, fuller than any other similar span of the poet's life. These years are packed with the most varied and interesting experiences ; and so indelible was the memory which Goethe's magnetic personality left on all with whom he came in contact that we have abundant light thrown upon him from many sides. Above all, his imaginative production was at no time more spontaneous and overwhelming than just between 1771 and 1775 ; never was his genius more compelling than when to all the world he was " the author of *Werther*." We have still *Dichtung und Wahrheit* to guide us through the maze of this rich experience ; but the veil of poetry drawn across the truth by the old man's remoteness from the facts becomes increasingly distorting as that work progresses. Twenty years lay between the publication of the first volume of the Autobiography and the last, and we have but to compare the picture of Friederike with that of Lili Schönemann to see how much we have lost by that consideration for the feelings of the living which did not allow Goethe to give the last volume out of his hand until Lili was dead.

On his return to Frankfort this time Goethe could reckon on a friendly welcome ; for he returned with the

qualifications which permitted him to enter at once on his profession as an advocate. The old councillor could not but be satisfied with his son, and he was—for a time at least ; but, no doubt, he heard little about Herder, and nothing at all about Friederike. It was now a question of settling down to a steady professional career ; his application for admission to the roll of advocates was presented and granted without delay ; and Rat Goethe was ready to lend his son a helping hand. Settling down was not, however, in the young Titan's books ; routine of any kind was distasteful to him, and business meant at first merely drafting dull legal documents. Actual practice was slow in coming ; indeed, in the first half year only two cases were entrusted to him, and his excessive zeal and impetuosity in the conduct of one of them brought upon him a reprimand from the court. Frankfort, then a smaller town than Strassburg, seemed to him dull and depressing ; the memory of the vanished happiness of Sesenheim, just as four years before, that of Leipzig, added to his discontent ; and the disquieting ferment of Herder's ideas was not conducive to an unperturbed mental life. His brain was ringing with Alsatian Volkslieder ; his heart was with Homer, Ossian and Shakespeare ; and on the last-mentioned's "name-day"—that of William in the calendar—October 14th, he held the exuberant oration from which a quotation has already been made. So far, Goethe had but one friend and confidante, his sister Cornelia ; to her alone he confessed the story of Sesenheim.

Towards the end of November he took up the naive autobiography of Gottfried von Berlichingen. This seemed to him to provide exactly the mould into which he could pour his irrepressible Shakespeare enthusiasm ; and

in a few weeks he had constructed a rugged chronicle-drama round this hero with the iron hand. *Götz von Berlichingen*, when it appeared in print two years later, pruned and polished, was Goethe's first literary triumph ; it took Germany by storm, and inaugurated the so-called "Geniezeit" or "Sturm und Drang" of German literature. But from the biographer's point of view, the cruder version of the play, as Goethe wrote it in 1771, *Geschichte Gottfriedens von Berlichingen*, is the more interesting. Goethe embarked upon his task of dramatisation with more enthusiasm than sober reflection on the difficulties of his task. The picturesque sixteenth-century freebooter, whose hand was against most men's, and whose life was one long round of feuds, fascinated him. Here was an exemplar of manly virtues to hold up to an effeminate age, a "noble German." But one suspects that Goethe did not find it always an easy task to put the "nobility" of his hero in a convincing light. His Götz is a blunt, straightforward, "honest" malcontent ; but to make out a good case for the moral justification of his client, who ruthlessly executes justice according to his own ideas of right and wrong, and casuistically reconciles his loyalty to his emperor with disrespect for the emperor's laws, required all the young advocate's professional skill ; it could only be done effectively by blackening the opposing party. And when his Götz dies with the cry for freedom on his lips, one is tempted to ask : what freedom ? Was this "noble" German anything more than a disrupter of the peace, a rebel—it may be, a rebel with a great heart—but still a rebel, who never rises to the understanding which Schiller's Robber Moor acquired, that "a fellow like him" would, unchecked, soon bring the world about his ears. Goethe had not proceeded very far with his

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dramatisation when he felt instinctively that the chronicle of Götz's life had not sufficient substance in it to make a satisfactory play, free as were Goethe's "Shakespearean" ideas of what a play might be. He could present his hero in effective episodes drawn from his feud with the Swabian Bund and his share in the Peasants' War ; he could show us him besieged in his castle of Jaxthausen or—a particularly fine scene—defying, Luther-like, the emperor's councillors in the town hall of Heilbronn who had certainly more right on their side than he, ultimately to be rescued at the critical moment by Franz von Sickingen. The period provided picturesque costumes and colour, including the fascinatingly "creepy" episode of the Holy "Vehmgericht," which had an interesting reverberation in our own literature. The sympathies of Goethe's own sentimental age could be evoked by the introduction of "tender" scenes from Götz's family life, by his wife, sister and little son ; and the curtain could be ultimately brought down on Götz dying for an unregenerate age that was unable to appreciate his worth. This might have been enough to satisfy Goethe's contemporaries, who interpreted Shakespeare's art as merely the artless portraiture of great personalities ; but Goethe felt instinctively that it did not provide opportunities for a real drama. He felt, too, the need of some nexus with his own personal experience, without which nothing he put his hand to thrived. He thus superimposed a second plot for which the autobiography of Götz offered no hint ; and this invented plot has greater poetic virtue than the facts drawn from Götz's chronicle. The unheroic Weislingen, who vacillates weakly between the colourless, domestic Marie, Götz's sister, and that monster of passion, Adelheid von Walldorf, has become a more interesting and subtler figure

than the heroic *Götz*. And in Weislingen's abandonment of Marie Goethe relived the emotional crisis of Sesenheim. Not that there is much, or, indeed, anything of Friederike in Marie ; and Adelheid is so crudely imagined—a young man's erotic fancy decked out with feathers from Shakespeare's Cleopatra—that it is safe to say she is merely a foil, an exoneration, such as life itself failed to provide, for the poet's own faithlessness. And to Weislingen is meted out the retribution which the conscience-stricken lover of Friederike felt he had himself merited. When Goethe revised his drama, he saw how little flesh and blood his Adelheid possessed, and he whittled down her rôle so ruthlessly that she became almost one of the minor characters of the play. The published play of 1773 shows in all technical respects a marked advance over the "*Skizzo*," but its lack of reasonable unity of action and its restless scene-shifting make it still an impracticable drama for the theatre. Goethe's justification was, of course, Shakespeare, but he had yet to learn wherein Shakespeare's form consists. And yet something of the great Shakespearean art of characterisation has passed over into Goethe's drama ; its people live in an immediate Shakespearean way ; and its dialogue has still, even in our day, vitality and truth. *Götz von Berlichingen* must not be judged from too absolute a critical standpoint ; it has never meant for the world at large what it meant for Germany ; but we in England cannot forget that it may have been the acorn from which sprang our *Waverley Novels*.

Life began to grow more tolerable for Goethe in his native town as new friends gathered round him. Herder, or at least Herder in his critical and oppositional mood, found a successor in Johann Heinrich Merck, an army

paymaster in Darmstadt. Merck became to Goethe now what Behrisch had been in Leipzig, the Mephistopheles which his Faust-like nature required as a foil and supplement to itself. Merck's circle of friends in Darmstadt provided Goethe's imaginative life with a welcome resonance-board; and its ladies, amongst whom was Herder's betrothed, Caroline Flachsland, were the occasion of agreeable philandering. Amidst these new distractions the Sesenheim memories receded into the distance and lost their sting. From poetry Goethe turned to book-reviewing, and he was a frequent contributor to the *Frankfurter Gelehrte Anzeigen*, the editorship of which had been taken over by his friend Merck at the beginning of 1772. His reviews—mostly of indifferent and long-forgotten books—are irresponsible and petulant *jeux d'esprit* rather than judicial criticisms; they are most interesting to us now when least relevant to the subject in hand. But the uncongenial routine of his profession—which he could not bring himself to regard as the real business of his life—and his father's latent hostility to his literary interests and ambitions, grew increasingly irksome; had it not been for his sister and the sympathy of his mother, who was always ready to mediate between him and his father when relations grew strained, life at home would have been quite intolerable.

It was consequently a relief to Goethe to fall in with his father's proposal that he should complete his professional training by spending some months at Wetzlar, the seat of the supreme courts of the Empire. The break with the newly-won Darmstadt friends was something of a wrench; but Wetzlar, as Leipzig and Strassburg before it, stood for freedom from the incubus of home. Goethe settled in this little town in May, 1772. We hear even less of

Goethe's law studies here than we had heard of them in Leipzig and Strassburg ; and indeed it is difficult to see how he could have learned much in Wetzlar, even had he had the will to do so. In this sleepy town the law had gone to sleep too ; and so far was the legal business of the courts in arrears, that their decisions often did not concern the living at all. Goethe avoided the staid professional society of the town, and found himself most at home in the livelier circle of younger men which gathered, under the fantastic fiction of knights of a round table—Goethe being immediately dubbed “Götz von Berlichingen”—in the Gasthof zum Kronprinzen. Still more did he revel in the beautiful surroundings and in the glories of the spring. Never, perhaps, in all his life was nature so intense an experience as now. A pocket Homer was his constant companion, to give place in somber moods to Ossian.

Goethe's Wetzlar love was Charlotte Buff, the nineteen-year old daughter of the Amtmann of the Teutonic Order, whom he met at a ball on the 9th of June. The account which Charlotte's fiancé, Johann Christian Kestner, gives of the matter tallies closely with the account as it appears in the novel which Goethe's Wetzlar romance inspired, *Werthers Leiden*. Kestner could only come late to the ball, and Lotte drove there in other company. In the carriage was Dr. Goethe. “Lottchen,” Kestner goes on, “drew at once his whole attention upon her. She is still young, and although her beauty—I use the word here in the ordinary sense, and know very well that beauty has really no rules—is not of the regular type, her features are very attractive and engaging ; her glance is like a bright spring morning, as it especially was on that day, for she loves dancing ; she was quite artlessly dressed.

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He recognised in her a feeling for the beauty of nature and an unforced wit—humour rather than wit. He did not know that she was not free. I arrived a few hours later ; and it was never our custom to show more than friendship for each other in public places. He was on that day extravagantly merry—he often is so, and at other times melancholy—Lotte completely conquered him, the more so as she made no effort to do so, but gave herself entirely up to the pleasure of the evening. Next day he did not fail to call on Lotte and inquire for her after the ball. He had before seen her as a merry girl, fond of dancing and unmixed pleasure ; now he made her acquaintance from the side where her strength lay, the domestic side.”

In Lotte Buff the spirit of Wetzlar, as Goethe saw it, took visible human form ; she stands for Wetzlar as Käthchen for Leipzig, and Friederike for Strassburg. Lotte with her Klopstockian sensitiveness to the beauties of the spring ; Lotte surrounded by her many brothers and sisters, mothering them—in the famous scene in *Werther* cutting their bread and butter—and capably managing her father’s house, responded to Goethe’s new mood, and dispossessed the fading muse of the Alsatian Volkslied. Goethe was again in love, and so wholeheartedly in love, that he could in after years even speak of Lotte Buff as the greatest love of his life. But this is only one more testimony to what I have called the imagined element in all Goethe’s passions ; the “poetry” and “truth” became now, as always, inextricably mingled, and the Lotte Goethe loved was merged unwittingly in the Lotte for whom Werther took his life. It is significant, however, that of all the women Goethe loved, Lotte Buff is the only one who never inspired a single lyric.

The untenableness of this new passion was, moreover, almost immediately apparent. The young Leipzig student had been long in undisturbed possession of Käthchen's love before her future husband appeared on the scene, and weeks of undiluted happiness elapsed before Friederike broke the spell in Strassburg's streets. But now, before Goethe had time to grow intimate with Lotte at all, he learned that she was already engaged, and engaged to Kestner, a colleague, secretary to the Brunswick Legation, and a good friend of his own. As befitted her practical commonsense and quite unpassionate nature, too, Lotte at once made it clear that she had no intention of breaking her engagement with Kestner. Kestner himself is something of an enigma. Goethe regarded his lack of jealousy as a sign of extraordinary magnanimity ; but when one reads Kestner's almost callously objective diary of his friend's passion for his betrothed, one is inclined to use a less complimentary adjective. In any case, there was not passion enough in Kestner's attitude to Lotte to obscure his ardent admiration for Goethe, and the picture he has left us of him is the most vivid we possess from this period. "He has very many talents," he says, "is a true genius and a man of character ; he possesses an extraordinary imaginative power and consequently expresses himself mostly in images and similes. . . . He is vehement in all his emotions, but has often much self-control. His way of thinking is noble ; so far free from prejudices, he acts as occurs to him, without troubling himself whether it may please others, whether it is in the fashion, or consonant with good breeding. All constraint is hateful to him. He loves children and likes to busy himself with them. He is whimsical and there are many things in his demeanour and appearance which might make him

distasteful. But with children, women and many men he stands, notwithstanding, in high favour. For the female sex he has a deep respect. In fundamental things he is not yet settled, and is still trying to find a definite system. He holds, for instance, a very high opinion of Rousseau, without being a blind worshipper of him. He is not what can be called orthodox ; but not from pride or caprice or from a desire to make himself conspicuous. . . . He hates scepticism, strives after truth and definite formulas in certain chief matters ; he believes that he has arrived at such in the case of the most important ; but as far as I see, this is not yet the case. He does not go to church, nor to communion, and rarely prays. 'For,' he says, 'I am not enough of a liar for that !' . . . For the Christian religion he has respect, but not in the form in which our theologians present it. He believes in a future life, a better state to come. He strives for truth, but attaches more importance to the feeling for it than to its proof."

Whatever we may think of Goethe's love for Lotte Buff—and the more we know of it and the real Lotte, the greater appear the divergences between his own passion and the erotic obsession of Werther—it took strong enough hold of the poet's sensitive imagination. Suffer he certainly did, even if his sufferings did not bring him, like his hero, in any way near to a catastrophe. He sought safety from the approaching crisis—as always—in flight. Leaving Wetzlar by stealth on September 11th, he travelled home by way of the Rhine ; and in the pleasant house at Ehrenbreitstein, of Sophie von Laroche, an old flame of Wieland's and by no means a negligible forerunner of the modern German novel, Goethe's elasticity of temperament asserted itself ; the harrowing memories of Wetzlar became less acute. To this end Sophie von Laroche's

black-eyed daughter, Maximiliane, then not quite seventeen, no doubt contributed ; although to say that Goethe transferred his passion for Lotte to her would be to ascribe an incredible fickleness even to so mercurial a temperament as his. Later there might be some reason to regard Maximiliane as a counterbalance, but hardly yet, when the wound was still bleeding.

Goethe returned to Frankfort—and coming home was a less pleasant experience than ever to him—returned to the old round of occupations, and to the old conflicts with his father. Legal business was naturally slack after his long absence in Wetzlar ; threads had to be picked up again, and Goethe was anything but eager to pick them up. Meanwhile, in spite of the precipitate flight from Lotte, Goethe's correspondence with her and her future husband continued ; her silhouette hung above his bed ; and in November he again paid a brief visit to Wetzlar. It was just before this visit that Goethe heard of the suicide from disappointed love for the wife of a friend, of a young colleague at the Wetzlar courts, Karl Wilhelm von Jerusalem. This, Goethe tells us, was the incident which, in a flash, made *Werthers Leiden* possible, "as water in a vessel, which is on the point of freezing, is suddenly converted into solid ice by the slightest shaking." It is doubtful, however, whether the genesis of the novel was quite so rapid or so simple ; for, as far as our evidence goes, he did not begin to write it in earnest until fifteen months later. This has to be borne in mind, for the opinion is widespread that the book was an immediate transference of a real experience ; but every work of the imagination, however subjective its origin, needs time to ripen. Moreover, 1773 was, as will be seen in the following chapter, a very full year in Goethe's life ; his mind was occupied with many

other projects. A further stage in the crystallisation of the novel was the approaching marriage of Lotte and Kestner, which took place on April 4th, 1773. This had been a constant shadow on Goethe all through the winter. Equally disconcerting was the engagement of his sister, who had always been his closest friend, to J. G. Schlosser, followed by her ill-starred marriage in the following November. Early in January, 1774, Maximiliane von La-roche, the black-eyed antidote to Lotte in Ehrenbreitstein, whom Goethe's mother would, I daresay, have liked best to see as her son's wife, was married to an elderly widower of Italian origin, Peter Brentano, who had a large grocery business in Frankfort. Even in that age of apparently happy *mariages de convenance*, it would have been surprising if this ill-assorted pair had found happiness. The young wife was profoundly miserable, and Goethe's sympathy with her fanned the flame that had been gently kindled in the autumn of 1772. His attentions were sufficiently conspicuous to lead to a "scene" with Maximiliane's husband and his being forbidden the house. Thus was the last link forged of the emotional chain of *Werthers Leiden*. In the spring of 1774, in little over a month, Goethe's first and most famous book was written. It was published in the autumn.

Die Leiden des jungen Werther, *The Sufferings of Young Werther*, or as we, with our inveterate Anglo-Saxon sentimentality, preferred to call it, *The Sorrows of Werther*, is much more closely bound up with Goethe's personal life and experience than anything else he had yet written; as far as its few outward happenings are concerned, he has utilised with realistic closeness his Wetzlar experiences; and the final scenes, even to the borrowing of his friend's pistols, were exactly modelled on what Goethe learned

about his friend Jerusalem's suicide. But the caveat against over-emphasising this aspect of the book must be repeated. Werther is no more Jerusalem than he is Goethe ; one has only to study attentively Goethe's account of his hero before he meets Lotte at all, to see how objectively Werther is conceived. The catastrophe is rooted in Werther's earlier life and upbringing, which were not Goethe's, and when that catastrophe does come, it comes, thanks to the careful preparation, with the inevitableness of high tragedy. To achieve this end, Goethe could obviously not have merely painted himself ; at no time was Goethe cut out to be a tragic hero. He drew upon his passion for Lotte Buff for the erotic elements of the novel ; but with these were blended later emotions which led to developments removing it still further from a mere record of that passion. However the Lotte and Albert of the first part of the novel may resemble their prototypes in life, they undergo a subtle change in the second part, due to the superimposition of experiences which lay nearer to Goethe than those of Wetzlar, when he wrote the book : Werther's Lotte takes on colouring from the more passionate and unhappy Maximiliane ; Albert from her unsympathetic elderly husband Brentano.

The fame and popularity of *Werthers Leiden* have been surpassed by no other book in the German tongue ; and few books in any literature have made so immediate and universal an appeal. Goethe never again wrote a work so completely "in the movement" as this. Yet unique as it is in form and contents, it is linked up by innumerable ties with the literary tradition. The epistolary form had been firmly established since Richardson had shown it to be best adapted to give the novel that note of intimate

personal revelation, which had superseded the tension of the old romance ; Goethe only differed from his predecessors by the fact that he reduced the complicated and unreal machinery of the letter-novel to the utmost simplicity. And again, without *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, it is safe to say that this passion, which is more enthralling than the gaudiest pageant of adventure, could hardly have come within the range of literary expression at all. But to this, his heritage, Goethe's genius brought the breath of life, and not merely sentimental life. For *Werther* is very much more than a sentimental love story ; were it only such, it would have passed with the sentimental vogue, and the power it still possesses to stir our imagination would be inexplicable. If we read *Werther* aright, its sentimental side is seen to be really the lesser part of it ; there are other thoughts, other motives in abundance—these, in fact, were overlooked or resented by its first sentimental readers. The compelling, dynamic force of the book lies, in the end, that it is a great human document, the intimate study of a human soul in travail, and that not merely in its relation to a loved woman, but to its entire environment, to man, nature and God. Above all, Goethe's Werther lives ; he is no mere literary speaking-trumpet, as Rousseau's St. Preux—also the victim of a great passion and great sufferings—so frequently is. Werther is a living being, writhing under a fate that proves too heavy for him to bear ; and Goethe's illuminating comparison in *Wilhelm Meister* of Hamlet to an acorn in a costly jar might well be applied to his own Werther. This slim, dolorous figure in the blue coat, yellow waistcoat and breeches is more than the denizen of a particular age ; he is one of the immortal figures of imaginative literature.

Nowhere is Goethe more unjust to his past than when

he comes, in the thirteenth book of his *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, to speak of this triumph of his youth. He wrote of it then as if it were little more than a reprehensible justification of suicide ; and looking back upon it at the jubilee of its first publication in 1824 (*Trilogie der Leidenschaft*), he almost forgot that it had once been a living, quivering, piece of flesh cut from nearest his own heart.

For long years Goethe was to the world at large " the author of *Werther*." I am not sure whether this is so great an injustice to him as it is customary to think. So much at least is true : *Werthers Leiden* is the greatest work—the greatest completed work without any question—that Goethe created before, in the noontide of life, he made his eventful journey to Italy.

Chapter Four

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The foregoing chapter has carried us far into the year 1774, as it seemed desirable to consider *Werthers Leiden* in association with Goethe's own experiences in Wetzlar. I have, however, to return to the year 1773. The three last years of Goethe's Frankfort life, 1773 to 1775, were extraordinarily full—full not merely of kaleidoscopic happenings, but also of productive energy ; they form a splendid climax to his magnificent youth. It is, indeed, no exaggeration to say that now, between his twenty-fourth and twenty-sixth year, Goethe's genius attained its acme of spontaneity and intensity ; no subsequent period of his life can vie with this in imaginative fertility. Great ideas crowded upon him faster than he could give them shape ; and the poetry and prose into which these ideas took shape with so little apparent effort, possess a magnetic quality, which the more deliberate and reflective productions of his after-life never attained. Now, if ever, Goethe was the great “naive” poet of Schiller's dream ; he seemed to be swept along—his own volition the smaller part of the force behind him—by some mysterious power outside himself, call it what we will : genius, inspiration, “daimon.” In the lives of all men of genius there is always one period—rarely more than one, and a brief one at that—when they are, in the fullest sense, leaders of their time. In Goethe's life, this supreme

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moment came now, when he swayed all minds by the compelling power of his *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Werther*, and, as the leader of the Rousseau-inspired individualistic revolt, won, for the first time, the respect of Europe for his people's literature.

Götz von Berlichingen, as we have seen, had appeared in its revised form in the summer of 1773, and had taken the young generation by storm. And in that flaming manifesto of "Storm and Stress," Herder's little volume *Von deutscher Art und Kunst* (*On German Ways and Art*) of the same year, Goethe had associated himself with his friend by contributing his glowing paean in honour of the builder of the Strassburg minster, *Von deutscher*—no longer "gotischer"—*Baukunst* (*On German Architecture*). This year, 1773, was a turbulent, unsettled and unsettling year in Goethe's life; on the one hand, the intoxicating enthusiasm with which *Götz* was received; on the other, an uneasy spiritual fermentation within him which gave him no rest. "People say," he wrote to Kestner, "that the curse of Cain is on me. But I have slain no brother; and I think the people are fools." At one time we find him engrossed in religious questions (*Brief des Pastors zu* * **, *Zwo wichtige biblische Fragen*); (*Letter of the Pastor at* * **, *Two Important Biblical Questions*); at another, giving vent to wit and spleen in satirical comedies. In the best of these, *Götter, Helden und Wieland* (*Gods, Heroes and Wieland*) Wieland comes under Goethe's lash for having, in a defence of his *Alceste*, ventured to mention himself in the same breath with Euripides; other satires, *Pater Brey*, *Satyros*, are very minor productions, interesting for the light they throw upon the poet, hardly for their own sake. Another minor literary field which Goethe cultivated in these days was the "Singspiel" or vaudeville;

but neither *Erwin und Elmire* nor *Claudine von Villa Bella* is very readable nowadays. Great imaginative themes were, however, crowding fast upon him : *Mahomet*, *Prometheus*, *Caesar*, *Faust*, not to speak of *Werther*. In a letter to Kestner of September 15th, we read : " I let my father now do quite what he likes ; he tries to entangle me daily more in the official affairs of the town ; and I acquiesce quietly. So long as I have the strength in me ! One tug, and all the sevenfold ropes are broken ! I am also much calmer and see that human beings are to be found everywhere, everywhere great things and little things, beautiful and ugly. For the rest, I am going on working steadily and hope to further all kinds of things this winter. . . . One word more in confidence as an author. My ideals grow daily in beauty and magnitude, and if my activity does not desert me and my love, there will be much more for my dear ones, and the public will also have its share."

As we have seen, 1774 opened with the writing of *Werthers Leiden*. With the completion of the novel Goethe experienced to the full that relief which the objective unburdening of his conflicts and sufferings always brought with it. In the egotism of genius, however, he had strangely miscalculated its effect on the two dear friends who, with himself, were inevitably regarded by the outside world as the actual actors in the tragedy. Lotte and her husband resented deeply the publicity into which they were dragged ; but this resentment soon passed, and the friendship continued unbroken.

In the month of May, 1774, and within a single week, Goethe gave his *Götz von Berlichingen* a worthier successor than the vaudevilles and satires that have just been mentioned : *Clavigo*. This is one of Goethe's works which

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is usually damned with faint praise by his modern critics ; I doubt whether with justice. For in more than one aspect *Clavigo* shows an advance over its predecessor. It is more firmly knit, having been dashed off—a rare thing with Goethe—almost at a sitting ; there was thus no room for that change of plan, that patching up, which so often spoiled the harmonious effect of Goethe's creations ; no second thoughts are allowed here to cross and neutralise the first. The theme itself, which was taken directly—often, indeed, quite literally—out of the *Mémoires* of Beaumarchais, and concerned still living people, is hardly strong enough to carry the burden of its five acts, and it moves a little more than one cares to see, in the conventional rut of the domestic tragedy of the day. But again Goethe shows himself a master in the art of bestowing life on his people ; not merely *Clavigo* and his mentor Carlos, who has no place in Beaumarchais' *Mémoires*, but even the subordinate characters, are more subtly alive than the sixteenth-century figures of *Götz* ; the two women, Sophie and Marie, are, in particular, more human than the Elisabeth and Marie of the earlier play. And there are pages of dramatic dialogue, which, in tense-ness and clear-cut give and take, has not its superior in the European drama of the time.

The year 1774 was of peculiar significance for Goethe's spiritual development and the building-up of his life philosophy. For in this year he found the one thinker, whom he, the most unmetaphysical of men, ever took completely to his heart, Spinoza. In the *Ethics* of Spinoza all the confused speculation, which, begun with the warm, dissolving pietism of Susanna von Klettenberg, led to so much religious doubt and vain puzzling over the problems of life, found guidance and direction. His re-

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ligious thought and conception of God crystallised now in that confession of faith, with which Faust answers Gretchen's concern about her lover's religion :

“ Wer darf ihn nennen ?
Und wer bekennen :
Ich glaub' ihn ?
Wer empfinden
Und sich unterwinden
Zu sagen : Ich glaub' ihn nicht ?
Der Allumfasser,
Der Allerhalter,
Fasst und erhält er nicht
Dich, mich, sich selbst ?
Wölbt sich der Himmel nicht dadoben ?
Liegt die Erde nicht hierunten fest ?
Und steigen freundlich blickend
Ewige Sterne nicht herauf ?
Schau' ich nicht Aug' in Auge dir,
Und drängt nicht alles
Nach Haupt und Herzen dir,
Und webt in ewigem Geheimnis
Unsichtbar sichtbar neben dir ?
Erfüll' davon dein Herz, so gross es ist,
Und wenn du ganz in dem Gefühle selig bist,
Nenn' es dann wie du willst,
Nenn's Glück ! Herz ! Liebe ! Gott !
Ich habe keinen Namen
Dafür ! Gefühl ist alles ;
Name ist Schall und Rauch,
Umnebelnd Himmelsglut.”

This spiritual side of Goethe's nature was deepened by the close ties that bound him in those years with Johann

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Caspar Lavater, a writer whom posterity, remembering only his *Physiognomische Fragmente*, to which Goethe made some contributions, has done less than justice. In June Lavater visited Frankfort and was received by the young poet with open arms ; and in July the two friends, together with Johann Bernhard Basedow, that visionary enthusiast, who endeavoured to give practical effect to the educational doctrine of *Emile*, spent at Ems and on the Rhine a delightful and stimulating holiday which Goethe describes with very evident pleasure in his Autobiography. The charming little poem, *Diné zu Coblenz*, has preserved a memory from that time :

“ Und, wie nach Emaus weiter ging’s
Mit Geist- und Feuerschritten,
Prophete rechts, Prophete links,
Das Weltkind in der Mitten.”

Such undiluted happiness he had not known since the first perfect days in Wetzlar ; the sufferings and conflicts of the intervening years were forgotten. In these happy weeks were written the dramatic fragments on the artist’s calling *Künstlers Erdewallen* (*The Artist’s Earthly Pilgrimage*) and *Künstlers Apotheose* (*The Artist’s Apotheosis*). In the autumn of 1774 Klopstock, who in Goethe’s mind at this time was associated with the joys of skating rather than with the *Messias*, paid a visit to Frankfort, and the two poets met for the first time. The year closed with the most significant visit of all, a visit which was to turn the whole course of Goethe’s life. On December 11th the two young princes of Weimar happened to pass through Frankfort. One of their tutors, Karl Ludwig von Knebel, who had been attracted by the fame of the poet, called upon Goethe and brought him for the first

time into touch with the magic circle of Weimar. The elder brother, Karl August, was impressed and charmed by Goethe ; and, indeed, the liking was mutual.

It is probable that in this year the greatest of all Goethe's early creations was largely written, the immortal tragedy of common life, which was to form the human kernel of the world-drama of *Faust*. It is to be regretted that this early form of Faust, fragmentary as it is, was not given to the world when it was written, instead of not until 1790, or indeed, 1887. For it would assuredly have broadened enormously the fame of the author of *Werther*. It is a pity, too, that the sophisticated readers of our modern time cannot approach Goethe's master-work through this early portal, in all ignorance of the later transformation of this moving human tragedy into a philosophical drama. English readers instinctively recall Marlowe when they take up Goethe's *Faust* : but where Goethe stands nearest to Marlowe is not in the completed First Part of his drama, but in this ebullient creation of his youth. Faust is here no philosophic grey-beard, who requires a witches' potion to allow him to play out his rôle ; he is young, as Goethe was young ; he rattles at the bars of the cage to which his zeal for knowledge has condemned him, as Goethe himself had rattled at his academic cage in Leipzig and Strassburg. The passionate disillusionment which Faust experiences, is the disillusionment of youth, not yet expanded into gnawing meditations over a long span of life lived unwisely ; the fairer world he seeks was still something that was within the power of the tempter to give him. And that tempter ! What a magnificent flesh and blood devil he is ! We are not concerned here with hair-splitting speculations as to whether Mephistopheles is an emissary of the Earth Spirit, or to what hier-

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archy he belongs in a world where evil is subservient to the furtherance of the good ; it is enough that for the young Titan he is the arch-enemy, the devil. And to these two great dramatic figures is added a third : Margarete. Goethe has contributed no more living and sympathetic portrait to the gallery of his women than this simple burgher girl of the fragmentary first *Faust*. The naiver tone of the scenes in which she appears here, as compared with those of the completed poem, adds to the beauty and intensifies the pathos. No room is left for considerations of "tragic guilt" and dramatic theory; Gretchen is merely involved in the meshes of the spirit of evil, and goes down in guiltless ruin. The harrowing pathos of her death in prison—intensified, it may be, with motives borrowed from *Hamlet*—is one of the sublime things of dramatic literature. Did not George Eliot say these scenes were more moving than anything in Shakespeare himself? There is no compromise here with the ruthlessness of tragedy ; no "she is saved" at the close to mitigate our pity for Gretchen ; nor is there any cheating of the devil out of his booty, to permit Faust to rise upon his dead self to higher things in a larger earthly life. The relentless handling of the tragic problem in this early *Faust* was something that lay frankly beyond the power of the conciliatory Goethe of riper years. The completed *Faust* of 1808, to which I have to return in due course, contains loftier, more arresting and compelling thoughts ; but in respect of imaginative emotional poetry, the greatest in *Faust* is already here. It is what Goethe wrote now that has enshrined *Faust* in the hearts of the world, not the mature philosophy which was poured into it in his later years. With his *Faust* and *Werther*, to leave out of consideration his lyric and all else, this youth

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of twenty-five already stands among the great creators of literature.

It was reserved for the last year in Frankfort to provide the emotional element and the appropriate muse of this phase of Goethe's life. What Lotte Buff had been for Wetzlar, Lili was for Frankfort. On New Year's day, 1775, he was invited to the house of a Frau Schönemann, the widow of a wealthy Frankfort banker ; it was a world hitherto unknown to Goethe, this of the Frankfort plutocracy, and he felt no great desire to be drawn into it. But he was attracted by the seventeen-year-old daughter of the house, Anna Elisabeth, or, as she was familiarly called, Lili ; and he slipped rapidly, and perhaps a little to his surprise, into love. Lili sang his songs, and rode out with him. The love was not altogether without hindrances ; the frivolous circles in which Lili moved were little to Goethe's taste, while she, on her part, could have but little understanding for her lover's world. The families on both sides were difficult to convince that a union was desirable, a view to which posterity will not, I think, so readily subscribe ; for the social butterfly of 1775 was to develop into a woman of singularly noble character, who bore up bravely in great adversity. It may be a little fanciful to say that Goethe erected a monument to her in his Dorothea ; but for none of his early loves did Goethe carry down with him to his grave so deep a respect and consideration as for Lili Schönemann. In spite of family opposition, and as a result of the intervention of a meddling match-making relation, a formal betrothal was arranged. Goethe was once more in the toils of a very real passion—"Rinaldo in the old chains"—as may be seen from that best of proofs, the splendid lyrics she inspired. To her he wrote,

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“Herz, mein Herz, was soll das geben?” and the wonderful song :

“Warum ziehst du mich unwiderstehlich,
Ach ! in jene Pracht ?
War ich guter Junge nicht so selig
In der öden Nacht ?

“Heimlich in mein Zimmerchen verschlossen,
Lag im Mondenschein,
Ganz von seinem Schauerlicht umflossen—
Und ich dämmert’ ein.

“Träumte da von vollen goldnen Stunden
Ungemischter Lust !
Hatte schon dein liebes Bild empfunden
Tief in meiner Brust.

“Bin ich’s noch, den du bei so viel Lichtern
An dem Spieltisch hältst ?
Oft so unerträglichen Gesichtern
Gegenüber stellst ?

“Reizender ist mir des Frühlings Blüte
Nun nicht auf der Flur ;
Wo du, Engel, bist, ist Lieb’ und Güte,
Wo du bist, Natur.”

Still, in his more objective moments Goethe could, as it were, stand aside and wonder at the hold which Lili in spite of her unsympathetic surroundings had upon him. And there was another disturbing thought : the fetters marriage would lay upon him. At no time of his life did his genius, conscious of its growing strength, feel so much the need of freedom as now.

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Early in the year, when Lili had just appeared on Goethe's horizon, he was the recipient of enthusiastic letters of admiration from the two young Counts Stolberg, two brothers, who belied their aristocratic antecedents by their espousal, in prose and poetry, of the rebellious doctrines of the literary revolution. Amongst the letters he received from them, were some from their sister Auguste, which made a peculiarly sympathetic appeal to the young poet ; and to this unknown correspondent he was tempted to open and unburden his heart. Auguste, indeed, became—and not merely now, but for years—a kind of confidante, to whom Goethe opened his heart. Some of the most intimate letters of this time are addressed to her ; and nearly forty years later, the old cordiality was renewed. And yet Goethe and Auguste zu Stolberg never met face to face ! Surely of all Goethe's relations to women this is the strangest !

In May the Stolbergs, contemplating a tour in Switzerland, arrived in Frankfort. They invited Goethe to accompany them, and he, vaguely uneasy under the binding tie to Lili, saw his opportunity : flight. He set out with his two companions through Baden ; in Karlsruhe he not only met again the Duke of Weimar and Knebel, but also the Duke's destined bride, Luise, daughter of the Markgraf of Baden, who made the pleasantest of impressions on him. “ Luise is an angel,” he wrote, and he picked up some flowers that had fallen from her breast and preserved them in his pocket-book. Thus were links for the future being forged. Strassburg, too, was re-visited and old memories revived ; but his way did not take him this time to Sesenheim. In Switzerland a long stay was made at Zürich, where his good friend,

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Lavater, for whom his feelings were still uncooled, introduced him to his circle, to Salomon Gessner, and to the old patriarchs of Swiss literature, Bodmer and Breitinger. In Zürich Goethe parted from the Stolbergs and, with another friend, made a tour which took him to the heights of the St. Gotthard Pass, almost within sight of Italy which, since his childhood, he had always hoped to visit. But even here, Lili could not be banished from his thoughts :

“ Im holden Tal, auf schneebedeckten Höhen
War stets dein Bild mir nah !
Ich sah's um mich in lichten Wolken wehen ;
Im Herzen war mir's da.
Empfinde hier, wie mit allmächt'gem Triebe
Ein Herz das andre zieht,
Und dass vergebens Liebe
Vor Liebe flieht.”

Thus the flight to Switzerland had failed in its main object ; indeed, distance had only strengthened the magnetic force in Frankfort that held Goethe in its grip. Once home, he was again in the throes of the old conflict between his genius and his passion ; and to this were now added occasions for a jealousy that only fanned the flame.

That rebellious Titanism in Goethe which refused to be tamed or fettered, finds nowhere nobler expression than in the magnificent soliloquy of Prometheus, written probably at this time, which concentrates the poetic essence of a drama he had sketched at an earlier date. Goethe never wrote a poem which came so straight out of his stormy heart as this.

“ Bedecke deinen Himmel, Zeus,
 Mit Wolkendunst,
 Und übe, dem Knaben gleich,
 Der Disteln köpft,
 An Eichen dich und Bergeshöhn ;
 Musst mir meine Erde
 Doch lassen stehn,
 Und meine Hütte, die du nicht gebaut ,
 Und meinen Herd,
 Um dessen Glut
 Du mich beneidest. . . .

“ Ich dich ehren ? Wofür ?
 Hast du die Schmerzen gelindert
 Je des Beladenen ?
 Hast du die Tränen gestillet
 Je des Geängsteten ?
 Hat nicht mich zum Manne geschmiedet
 Die allmächtige Zeit
 Und das ewige Schicksal,
 Meine Herrn und deine ?

“ Wähnstest du etwa,
 Ich sollte das Leben hassen,
 In Wüsten fliehen,
 Weil nicht alle
 Blüenträume reiften ?

“ Hier sitz' ich, forme Menschen
 Nach meinem Bilde,
 Ein Geschlecht, das mir gleich sei,
 Zu leiden, zu weinen,
 Zu geniessen und zu freuen sich,
 Und dein nicht zu achten,
 Wie ich ! ”

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Goethe gave expression to the hemming entanglement of his passion in another play written in the first half of 1775, for which he always had a warm place in his heart, *Stella*, "a drama for lovers." Here is again the obsessing problem of the faithless lover ; but this time with an attempt to find a more conciliatory issue than that of *Götz* or *Werther*. Fernando, another Weislingen with two passions in his breast, is left at the close the happy husband of both ladies. The literary precedents on which Goethe built—the Graf von Gleichen, Swift—were not, however, enough to make such an extravagant ending acceptable ; and *Stella* has been generally condemned as a deplorable aberration. With us in England, it will be remembered, it was singled out for particular attack by the *Anti-Jacobin*. There is, however, injustice in dismissing it too summarily ; *Stella* is an interesting document of Goethe's eroticism and the eroticism of its age ; and it opens unexpected windows on the eighteenth-century soul. It would, at the same time, be unwise to associate it too closely with Goethe's love for Lili, to find in *Stella* her portrait, or to seek a model for Fernando's other love, Cäcilie ; I doubt whether his particular emotional troubles at this time contributed as much to it as is generally assumed. If as a drama *Stella* is impossible, it is because Goethe had not reflected enough about the problem he had set himself ; had not taken care enough to make its characters psychologically real, their conversation reasonably natural, and the incidents he introduces probable. Subsequently Goethe endeavoured to save *Stella* by a rough and ready theatrical conversion of it into a tragedy of the *Werther* kind where *Stella* takes poison and Fernando shoots himself. The Goethe of later years—as we shall see from his handling of a not

unsimilar erotic problem in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*—would, no doubt, have found a better solution by developing the renunciatory motive which is now gently intoned in the play as it stands ; but the young Goethe of 1775 was in no mood yet to see life from this angle.

In that year a much more important work was being leisurely put together, the tragedy of *Egmont*. It is true, *Egmont* was no more completed now than *Faust* ; it was added to in Weimar, and not given its final polish until Goethe was in Rome, to be published ultimately in the year 1788. But, as with *Faust*, the first conception and the plan belong to these extraordinarily productive Frankfurt years.

Egmont is Goethe's second incursion into the field of the historical drama ; and compared with its predecessor, *Götz von Berlichingen*, it bears witness to the rapid maturing of the poet's genius. Goethe has now abandoned his Shakespearean technique, although he is still unwilling to subject himself to the yoke of classical tragic form. Indeed, in technical respects *Egmont* is less defensible than *Götz* ; it has much less of what might be called plot. Both plays set out to give a dramatic portrait of a hero. This, indeed, is the only unity to which they aspire ; but whereas the portrait of *Götz* was accompanied by dramatic conflicts and progressive dramatic action, there is little of either in its successor. *Egmont* leaves upon us the impression of being only a series of dramatic pictures—Egmont adored by the populace of Brussels, Egmont the victim of the Spanish oppressors, baffled in dispute with the wise realist, Orange, in love with Klärchen, or again, in defiant elation marching to the scaffold—which have little organic connection with one another, apart from what they derive as throwing light from different sides on

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Egmont himself. With seeming indifference Goethe introduces motive after motive, which might well with skilful handling have provided an adequate dramatic weft, and he lets them all slip unused ; the play is full of broken ends. *Egmont* is a political drama, as *Götz* had also been, a drama the theme of which is political freedom ; its background the revolt of the Low Countries against Philip II of Spain ; but its binding element is not its political machinations and intrigue, but the personality of its hero. Egmont throws caution to the winds ; remains in Brussels when flight would have been more prudent, falls into the clutches of Graf Alba and his minions, is thrown into prison and executed. That is the whole "story." In later years, in Weimar, Goethe did attempt to introduce a more deliberate political note ; and to this time belong, no doubt, the fine scene between Egmont and Orange in Act II, and that with the Duke of Alba's natural son, Ferdinand, in Act V ; but it hardly alters the fact that the drama remains the "portrait of a hero." And here, indeed, lies its strength. Graf Egmont stands beside Werther and Mephistopheles as one of the subtlest figures Goethe had yet conceived ; and he is perhaps the most personally attractive of all Goethe's heroes. Seen not merely subjectively like Werther, but from all sides, he is the embodiment of the "daimonic" power of bending other mortals under a personal spell, which Goethe himself possessed in a high degree, and of which in the course of his long life he was to observe so many and so diverse examples. Whatever may be the situation in which Egmont is placed, he never forfeits our sympathy ; the magic of his personality carries all before it. The same winning charm is to be seen in Klärchen ; indeed, it would be difficult to point anywhere in dramatic literature

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to a figure, depicted in so comparatively few lines of prose and song—she only appears in four episodic scenes—who so completely wins our hearts. No less living a creation than Faust's Gretchen, she stands with her in Goethe's gallery of women as an allegra at the side of a penserosa. To describe *Egmont* as a great drama—the French critic Ampère called it Goethe's greatest—would be to fly in the teeth of all traditions of dramatic composition ; and yet I am not sure whether it does not remain, of all Goethe's works in dramatic form, the one which still has for us, even from the stage, most fascination. With *Egmont* Goethe found himself at the parting of the ways ; it marks the beginning of a more conciliatory and objective attitude to life than he had known in his Frankfort days ; and, still more significant, it testifies to a change of which I shall have more to say later, that was coming over Goethe's poetic art. *Egmont* is the transition work which leads from his " Storm and Stress " to his sedater middle years.

The day of Goethe's release from Frankfort and the hemming fetters of his passion for Lili was nearer than he expected. On October 12th, 1775, the young Duke of Weimar arrived with his newly wed bride in Frankfort, and invited Goethe to accompany him on a visit to Weimar. Despite the opposition of his father, who saw in this dalliance with princes a reprehensible dereliction of his son's professional duties and responsibilities, Goethe accepted the invitation. On the appointed day, however, the Duke's envoy, Kammerrat von Kalb, who was to fetch him, failed to appear. Days passed in which Goethe felt ashamed to face his friends from whom he had already taken leave ; he only ventured out under cover of night, and on one of these occasions—again, if *Dichtung und*

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Wahrheit is to be trusted—he found himself under Lili's window :

“ She lived on the ground floor of a corner house, the green blinds were let down ; but I could see very well that the lights stood in their usual places. Soon I heard her singing at the piano ; it was the song ‘ *Warum ziehst du mich unwiderstehlich ?* ’, which had been written to her not quite a year before. I could not but think that she sang it more expressively than ever ; I could hear it plainly word by word ; for I had pressed my ear as close to the window as the projecting lattice permitted. After she had finished singing, I saw by the shadow that fell on the blind that she had risen ; she walked backwards and forwards, but in vain I tried, through the thick material of the blind, to catch a glimpse of the outline of her sweet self. Only my firm resolution to depart, not to trouble her with my presence, really to renounce her, and the thought that my reappearance would make a strange impression, made me decide to leave a proximity that was so dear to me.”

At last, convinced that the Duke of Weimar had forgotten his invitation, he agreed to his father's counterplan, that he should visit Italy. Accordingly a post chaise was ordered, and he set out from Frankfort on October 30th. He had only, however, reached Heidelberg, where he was the guest of the lady who had been instrumental in bringing about his engagement with Lili, when von Kalb overtook him ; and in spite of the earnest pleadings of his hostess, who had other plans for him at the Karlsruhe court, his resolution was rapidly taken. For the second time the journey to Italy was abandoned.

“ The chaise stood before the door packed ; the postilion gave the usual signs of impatience ; I tore myself

away . . . passionately and enthusiastically repeating the words of Egmont : ‘ Child, child no further ! The coursers of time, as if lashed by invisible spirits, hurry on the light car of our destiny, and all that we can do is, with calm courage, to hold the reins tight, and to guide the wheels, now to the left, now to the right, avoiding a stone here, or a precipice there. Who can tell whither he is being borne, seeing that he hardly remembers whence he came ? ’ ” With these words *Dichtung und Wahrheit* closes.

Well might Goethe see in this happening the finger of Providence, in which he never through the course of his long life of splendid opportunities and achievement, lost faith, a faith that was the foundation of his imperturbable optimism.

So ends what must always remain the most attractive and fascinating period of our poet’s life : “ der junge Goethe.” The youth of Goethe is the youth of genius incarnate. No arguments or pleadings are necessary to enlist the reader’s sympathy for his magnificent personality ; and even if the brilliant series of his creations on these years may contain much that has faded from our interest now—and much that occupies but a modest niche in the treasure-house of German poetry—we accept them all with gratitude as illuminating documents of the growth of a great mind. In these years Goethe stood in the fore-front of the intellectual movement of his time and country as its acknowledged leader ; and indeed, this was the only time in the course of his long life that such unconditional leadership was granted to him. For he could not escape the lot of surpassing genius, that of outstripping the movement which it initiates, and losing touch with it. From now on he stands apart

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from his time ; often out of sympathy with it and in antagonism to it ; nor was he always—in respect of the developments which meant most for the future, notably those of the Romantic movement—in advance of it. But that he was the greatest of German men of letters could no longer be questioned.

Chapter Five

WEIMAR

1775 - 87

So far, the biographer of Goethe has had the advantage of the leading strings provided by the poet himself in his Autobiography ; he has found the facts accumulated for him there, sifted, ordered. Sometimes he may have been tempted to cavil at the poet's own interpretation of himself ; but he has at least known what Goethe regarded as most desirable to be recorded. Now, however, a period is reached when Goethe's reconstructive labours cease, and when the architect of Goethe's life is thrown upon his own resources ; he has to collect and fit in the stones of his edifice without more than hints of how the poet himself would have liked to see it built. Nor do we possess such reliable data now as in the Frankfort period ; there seem to be fewer witnesses to testify to Goethe's life and thought, and we are left more in the dark—a dark which, it is true, recent years have helped to disperse—in respect of what Goethe actually planned and wrote in these years. But one fact emerges clearly : Goethe's power of bringing his work to completion, of wrestling with the poetic idea until it has rendered up its ultimate essence, visibly slackens ; to all appearance, a period of comparative sterility sets in. Thus the first ten years of Goethe's life in Weimar are as difficult years to interpret as any in

his long life ; and yet they cover an exceedingly important period of his spiritual development.

The duchy of Saxe-Weimar did not differ essentially, unless in so far as it was smaller and poorer, from most of the other petty states among which the Holy Roman Empire was parcelled out. The duke was an ordinary and typical young man of the pre-revolutionary ruling class ; he was wayward and unbalanced, often politically unwise—although in maturer years he did, as will be seen, acquire considerable political wisdom—stubborn in his assumption of authority, and inclined—as has always been the way with German princelets—to interfere in matters of which he knew little or nothing. The best side of the court was its liberal toleration of the arts ; but this was less due to the young duke himself than to his mother, the dowager duchess Anna Amalia, a niece of Frederick the Great and a woman of intellectual distinction and fine taste. There was a genuine desire in Weimar to make poetry and the arts something more than a mere amusement for idle courtiers and an antidote to the tedium of a dull provincial town ; here was, in fact, a court which prided itself on bidding the muses welcome. The presence in Weimar of Wieland, who, since 1772, had been tutor to the two young princes, was a guarantee of this goodwill.

Goethe arrived in the little town on November 7th, 1775, at five o'clock in the morning ; he was to stay in the house of Kammerrat von Kalb, in whose chaise he had travelled. A dinner was given that same day in his honour, at which he met Wieland ; and in his delight at making the acquaintance of the author of *Werther*, Wieland readily forgot and forgave the author of *Götter Helden und Wieland*—as, indeed, he already had in his magnanimous review of the farce in his *Teutscher Merkur*.

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Goethe's relations with him became exceedingly cordial. The conditions under which the young poet came to Weimar were peculiarly flattering ; he was not only the guest of the duke, but he had, as we have seen, been pressed to accept the invitation after, to all appearance, he had sought to evade it. It is pleasant to think that this invitation was due to discriminating appreciation of Goethe's genius. But it would be unwise to attribute to the duke, then only a youth of twenty-two, very lofty motives ; he had taken a personal liking to Goethe ; he saw in him a man who would be an attractive associate ; and in the early months the poet no doubt came up to his host's expectations. He was only too willing to be boon companion of the young ruler in his quest for amusements that were often neither respectable nor decorous. This was what the duke looked for in Goethe, not poetic genius—the sentimentalities of *Werther* were little to his taste—and Goethe did not disappoint him. The unvarnished story of these wild days, the discreditable amours and rough horse-play which appealed to the duke's tastes, does not make pleasant reading. No wonder that Goethe fell into bad odour in the better circles of Weimar, was accused of leading the duke astray ; and the situation was not improved when Goethe's literary friends—Lenz, Klinger, none of them very respectable—visited him. Even Klopstock, whose ears no doubt exaggerated gossip had reached, felt it incumbent upon himself to write Goethe a serious letter about his doings. It was certainly not a good beginning.

To the duke Goethe proved so acceptable a companion that he was determined not to let him go ; he took steps to make his residence permanent. Goethe's father did what he could to prevent the realisation of these plans

by refusing to supply his son with money. But the duke was not to be balked ; he not only gave Goethe a " garden house " on the river, but also a salaried and responsible position in his government, promoting him over the heads of bureaucrats who had grown grey in the state service. To Goethe's credit it must be said that he did not acquiesce without some struggle ; it was February, 1776, before he succumbed to the duke's temptations. Again we are asked to applaud the insight of this young ruler, who perceived possibilities in Goethe for the welfare of his state to which others were blind. But was his action other than that of any eighteenth-century potentate who raised a friend or a favourite to power ? We must also guard against exaggerating the seriousness of Goethe's assumption of the rôle of statesman ; his diaries for several years reveal a record of inane and frivolous diversions which is difficult to reconcile with seriousness of any kind. Once, however, he had taken to heart the well-grounded complaints about his behaviour ; once, too, he felt sure of his position, he exercised a most beneficial influence on his patron, helping to mould his intractable character and educating him into a wise ruler of his little state. No favourite in the end justified the responsibility with which he was entrusted better than Goethe did. And as the years went on, his energy became enormous, and concerned itself with every side of the country's interests and activities. He took in hand the silver and copper mines at Ilmenau and set them working again, a futile enough undertaking, as they could not be made to pay their way ; but it led to the poet acquiring a knowledge of mineralogy. To increase this knowledge he paid a visit to the Harz mining centres in November, 1777, on which occasion he made his winter

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ascent of the Brocken which has left its poetic precipitate in the poem *Harzreise im Winter* (*Harz Journey in Winter*). As a member of the building commission, he was concerned with the reconstruction of the ducal residence, which had been destroyed by fire in 1774 ; and he often helped to smooth over the frictions between the duke and his spouse, and to extricate his ne'er-do-well brother, Prince Constantin, from his frequent delinquencies.

One of Goethe's first acts had been to induce the duke to invite Herder to be court preacher in Weimar and general superintendent of the church in the duchy. This was a real gain to the intellectual life of the little capital, although hardly a wise step in the interests of the church, for the Weimar clergy were bitterly opposed to Herder's appointment. He reorganised the roads of the state, and, as minister of war, set its little army of six hundred men on a proper footing, besides circumventing the claim of Prussia to enlist men on Prussian territory. Put in control of the financial department in 1777, Goethe showed a firm hand, curbing the extravagance of the duke, reforming the slackness of the officials and dismissing dishonest ones. Lastly as "Intendant" for the redoubts and theatrical entertainments of the court, he took the leading part in those amateur performances which, until Weimar, from 1784 on, maintained a more or less permanent professional company, provided a surrogate for a court theatre. Naturally all this assumption of power meant friction with the established bureaucracy ; but the duke seems to have acted not merely firmly, but discreetly ; and Goethe's magnetic personality of itself cleared away many obstacles. "Goethe," said Merck, "exerts authority and directs everything ; and everybody is content with him, because

he serves many and injures no one. Who can resist the disinterestedness of the man ? ”

There can be no doubt of it : Goethe carried out all these manifold activities supremely well ; he developed into a minister of state as if he had been to the manner born. But there was surely another side, and a grave side to it all. Is it not tragic that this, the first poetic mind of his age, should have had to fritter away his splendid energies, playing at statesmanship in this duodecimo state ? Such things might well have been left to the men of official routine. It fills one with resentment to think of Goethe when writing his *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, having to interrupt his work to enlist recruits. And the Goethe, moreover, whose Götz and Egmont had died for freedom, nay, who only a few years before had wrecked his own happiness to attain that very freedom which he now so readily renounced ! The magnificent young rebel of Frankfort had thus early accepted as a rule of conduct the obsequious words which, years later, he placed upon the lips of his Tasso :

“ Doch glaube nicht, dass mir
Der Freiheit wilder Trieb den Busen blähe.
Der Mensch ist nicht geboren, frei zu sein,
Und für den Edlen ist kein schöner Glück,
Als einem Fürsten, den er ehrt, zu dienen.”

It has been admitted that Goethe's creative energy as a poet suffered when he became what Schiller would have contemptuously called a “ Fürstendiener ” ; but it has equally been urged that the experience which Goethe gained in the government of a state stood him in good stead by widening the basis of his life ; and that his pre-occupation with mineralogy and agriculture, his official

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contact with the university of Jena, turned his thoughts to natural science and made him a pathfinder here. All this is true ; but a doubt must enter into many minds, whether Goethe's scientific interests were not as great a crime against the majesty of his poetic genius as his immersion in the routine of state government. But of Goethe as a scientist it will be fitter to speak at a later stage. As the years moved on, he himself began to see what a waste of life the favours he enjoyed at the duke of Weimar's hands entailed ; perceived even that Weimar was another of these hostile forces that prevented the tree from growing into the sky. Perhaps, after all, Goethe's father was right when he so stubbornly opposed his son's acceptance of the Weimar invitation !

Goethe's first period in Weimar was punctuated by many journeys, usually in the company of his duke ; and his official duties compelled him to familiarise himself with every corner of the duchy. In 1776 he visited Dessau and Leipzig, where he saw again Käthchen, now Frau Doctor Kanne ; in 1777 took place the visit to the Harz, which has already been mentioned ; in 1778 he was in Berlin—for the first and only time—a city for which he had a real dislike. On September 12th, 1779, Goethe and the duke set out on the most ambitious and interesting of all their journeys of these years, that to Switzerland. Their route took them first to Cassel and Frankfort, where Goethe had the pleasure of entertaining the duke under his father's roof. It is true the old councillor was still sullenly unreconciled to his son's false step ; but his mother could not conceal her delight. Speier was then visited, from which the travellers turned southwards to Strassburg. This time Goethe did visit Sesenheim, where he saw Friederike again ; and in

Strassburg he found Lili, now married to a banker there, Friedrich von Türckheim. In Emmendingen Goethe paid his respects to the grave of his unfortunate sister Cornelia, who had died in childbirth in the summer of 1777. The journey was thus for him a kind of final winding-up of the accounts of his youth, a rounding-off of his early life. In October the duke and Goethe reached Basel, and in exceptionally fine weather for the late season of the year, visited Berne and the Bernese Oberland. And watching the Staubbach waterfall, Goethe wrote that wonderful poem, *Gesang der Geister über den Wassern* (*Song of the Spirits over the Waters*), in which we seem to catch a first glimpse of the wise, contemplative Goethe of later years :

“ Des Menschen Seele
 Gleicht dem Wasser :
 Vom Himmel kommt es,
 Zum Himmel steigt es,
 Und wieder nieder
 Zur Erde muss es,
 Ewig wechselnd.”

They then proceeded by way of Lausanne and Geneva to the Valais, and ascended to the Furka and St. Gotthard Passes. Again Goethe looked down towards Italy. “For the second time,” he wrote, “I am in this room on the summit ; what my thoughts are I do not say. Nor does Italy attract me this time. Such a journey would not benefit the duke now ; it would not be well to stay longer away from home. This—and the prospect of seeing you all again—turn away my eyes for the second time from the Promised Land, which I hope I shall not die without beholding.”

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On the way back some time was spent at Zürich, where Goethe had pleasure in meeting Lavater again. Visits were also paid to the courts at Stuttgart and Karlsruhe, and in the former town the duke and Goethe were present at a distribution of prizes in the Military Academy, where Schiller, then a lanky youth at the Academy, first set eyes on the greatest of his contemporaries. The travellers were home again in Weimar in the middle of January, 1780, after an absence of four months. Goethe subsequently put together his letters to Frau von Stein, as *Briefe aus der Schweiz*, a travel-book which in its interest and in the vividness of its descriptions hardly stands behind the *Italienische Reise*. He published these letters as an appendix to *Werther* ("Aus Werthers Papieren") in the edition of his works of 1808. The juxtaposition brings home to the reader the change which had come over Goethe's whole attitude to nature between 1774 and 1781. The intense personal and passionate note has given place to a calmer, and more objective appreciation.

The year 1782 established Goethe's position at the Weimar court on a footing of permanency. A patent of nobility was conferred upon him which removed all the disabilities hitherto imposed upon him by court etiquette ; and he acquired the spacious house on the Frauenplan, which was to remain his home for the rest of his life. In that year, too, his father died.

Weimar would have been less tolerable to Goethe than it was, had it not been for a new *liaison* which he formed there, the most lasting he ever knew except that with Christiane Vulpius. Charlotte von Stein, and Charlotte alone, made it possible for Goethe to remain fairly content in Weimar through nine long years ; she kept the vital spark of poetry alive in him ; his relations to her provide

the background for his spiritual development. The wife of the duke's master of the horse, Freiherr Friedrich Karl von Stein, whom she had borne seven children, which left her prematurely aged and in delicate health, she was thirty-three when Goethe met her, seven years his senior. As befitted the rôle she had to play as the poet's Weimar muse, she was a lady of the court, and, moreover, a "schöne Seele," and an admirer of Rousseau. She had literary tastes such as Goethe would not have dreamt of looking for in Lotte Buff or Lili. But her own incursions into poetry, notably an amateurish tragedy, *Dido*, in which in later years she avenged herself on Goethe when he turned faithless to her, do not give us much confidence that, without Goethe's glorifying halo, she could have proved an inspiring companion in this capacity. As a matter of fact, owing to her having demanded back and destroyed all her letters to Goethe, it is difficult to get at the truth of Charlotte's personal relations to him ; for what we can discern through Goethe's eyes is naturally untrustworthy. Something like fifteen hundred letters from Goethe to Charlotte von Stein have been preserved, and no doubt there were more : Charlotte, who laid store by respectability, could not but have exercised some discretion in suppressing what she regarded as too compromising. A large number of these are, however, the merest notes, there being no occasion for real letters unless when either Goethe or Charlotte was absent from Weimar. Like all love-letters, they are monotonous reading in the mass ; nor do they make the course of the passion very clear. From inferences and outside hints, however, we are able to distinguish three stages in his relation to her. The first covered the five years to 1780. Here the love was, if not platonic, at least kept within the bounds of

social propriety as it was understood at an eighteenth-century German court. Although clearly not of a passionate nature, Charlotte found in her devoted cavalier an outlet for a suppressed emotionalism, to which a loveless marriage to an uncongenial partner had condemned her. Goethe's letters are often passionate enough ; but it is clear from the offences taken and forgiven on the lady's part, the petty quarrels and reconciliations, that the love was not exclusively on his side. While jealously appropriating Goethe, she damped his ardour and kept him at his distance ; she taught him—at least, so he interpreted it—to prize in her, not emotional return for emotion, but a certain protective motherliness, which appealed to Goethe's own "mother-complex" ; he imagined that he found in her a refuge from his previous erotically storm-tossed life. From the poem "Warum gabst du uns die tiefen Blicke," written in April, 1776, we obtain an even clearer glimpse into Goethe's love in these years than from his letters :

"Kannstest jeden Zug in meinem Wesen,
Spähtest, wie die reinste Nerve klingt,
Konntest mich mit Einem Blicke lesen,
Den so schwer ein sterblich Aug' durchdringt:
Tropfstest Mässigung dem heissen Blute,
Richtetest den wilden, irren Lauf,
Und in deinen Engelsarmen ruhte
Die zerstörte Brust sich wieder auf."

This was something new in Goethe's relations to women, or, at least, new in its combination with the erotic element ; and it never recurred. His love for Charlotte von Stein was invested, in his own mind, with a halo of priesthood.

In the end of 1780, or the beginning of 1781, however, this love underwent a change which can only be explained in one way : the relationship passed over into an actual *liaison*. Possibly Charlotte felt the need of tightening her hold upon Goethe in view of threatening alienation by less scrupulous claimants on his interest. There was likely to have been little of the platonic element in his temporary interest in the hot-blooded actress Corona Schröter, whom he had induced the duke to invite from Leipzig to take part in the theatrical diversions of the court. In any case, for the next four or five years, from 1781 onwards, Goethe was entirely happy and contented. This phase is rung in by his letter of March 12th, 1781 :

“My soul is firmly grown into yours ; I cannot put it into words ; you know that I am inseparable from you and nothing high or deep can divide me from you. I would there were some vow or sacrament that made me yours visibly and legally ; how precious it would be to me ! And my noviciate was indeed long enough to think about it.”

Then, about 1785, begins a third stage ; that disillusionment which, sooner or later, undermined all Goethe's passions, gradually—at first almost imperceptibly—crept over his relations to Charlotte. It was not, however, until Goethe had been many months in Italy that he began to be conscious that the end was approaching.

I would regard the year or two from 1780 on as one of the most crucial periods—if not the most crucial—of the poet's whole life ; and it was not unconnected with his relations to Charlotte von Stein. A spiritual change came over him, which profoundly influenced the whole character of his imaginative work. For the first time free from obsessions, Goethe could look back on himself

objectively—look backward and forward, plan and build for the future. A more serious note comes into his diary, and in September, 1780, he wrote the often quoted letter to Lavater :

“The daily work which has been meted out to me, and which every day becomes easier and harder to me, demands my presence, awake or dreaming. This duty becomes continually dearer to me, and in fulfilling it, I wish to be the equal of the greatest men, and in nothing greater. This desire to raise the apex of the pyramid of my existence, the basis of which has been given and laid for me, as high as possible into the air, surpasses all else, and can hardly for a moment be forgotten. I must lose no time. I am already on in years, and fate may perhaps break me in the middle and the Babel tower be left blunt and uncompleted. At least it shall be said : it was boldly planned. And if I live, my powers, with God’s favour, will hold out until I reach the top. And very powerful is the talisman of a beautiful love, such as that with which Charlotte von Stein seasons life for me. She has by degrees succeeded to my mother, my sister, and my former loves, and a bond has formed between us as strong as are the bonds of nature.”

Clearly Goethe is beginning here to emerge as the self-conscious artist of life—of his own life. In lack of balance, “Schwärmerei,” Goethe saw the enemy of all well-being ; and from now on it is his constant endeavour to divest himself of this “Schwärmerei,” to give his life stability, order and purpose, to envisage it as a gift entrusted to him by the Creator. Thus early the problem, which was ultimately to become that of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, had begun to engross him, even if he had to wait until his journey to Italy to obtain complete mastery of it. And with the strengthening of this new positive and construc-

tive attitude to life a change comes over his imaginative work. His dualism—the “two souls within his breast”—assumes a new form. In his “Storm and Stress” days there was still no conscious gap between the experience and its imaginative precipitate : life and poetry were then, as it were, one. He had felt no need to subject the emotions of *Werther* to a refining, sublimating process, or to generalise and idealise the figures of *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Clavigo*, or of the first sketch of *Faust* : they were transferred glowing or bleeding to the printed page. But now, in these later Weimar years, the “Storm and Stress” passed ; Goethe’s originally unreflective genius became reflective ; his attitude to himself and to his art became henceforth an objective one. Life and poetry are no longer co-extensive ; poetry has become the “literary” interpretation of life, an “abstract” of reality.

It is a debatable question, to which I shall have occasion to return, whether this substitution of objectivity for subjectivity in Goethe’s art was to his advantage as a writer. In the end, Schiller was perhaps right : Goethe was essentially a great “naive” poet, not a “sentimental” one. When he renounced the “naive” for the reflective, the high lights of his genius went out. From now on he grew mightily in wisdom ; but with the passing of the spontaneity to which we owe the great creations of his youth, he lost something which his long and rich intellectual life was never able to compensate for. Our lack of documents makes it difficult for us to arrive at any more precise date than the early eighties for this momentous change in Goethe’s genius ; in any case, it was necessarily a gradual change. One thing, however, is clear : just as Goethe’s “Storm and Stress” did not come to an end, as used to be assumed, upon Goethe’s arrival in Weimar,

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so the conversion to the classic and reflective poet was equally not the consequence of his journey to Italy ; rather did Italy bring the consummation of a process of development that had begun much earlier.

The discoveries of recent years have, however, made this development clearer ; we have learned that Goethe's first ten years in Weimar were, in respect of poetic work, by no means such idle and fruitless years as we used to believe they were. What has to be deplored is not Goethe's idleness, but his inability to bring what he put his hand to to completion. It is true, the years when Goethe's life was wholly divided between state business and the trivial diversions of the court, its redoubts and private theatricals, were barren enough. The plays he wrote for the latter, *Lila*, *Der Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*, his modernisation of *The Birds*, of Aristophanes, *Jery und Bätely*, *Die Fischerin*—satirical or merely trivial—were as little worthy of his genius as the vaudevilles of the Frankfort years. Even *Die Geschwister*, in which he, pointedly enough, underlined for Charlotte von Stein's benefit the inadequacy of sisterly love, points back to the sentimentalities of *Stella*, rather than forward into the future. In the short poems of these years alone Goethe is still the master ; indeed, under the tranquilising influence of Charlotte, Goethe touched perhaps the highest point it was ever given to him to attain as a lyric poet. He has written nothing more beautiful than the matchless verses *An den Mond* :

“ Füllest wieder Busch und Tal,
Still mit Nebelglanz,
Lösest endlich auch einmal
Meine Seele ganz ;

“Breitest über mein Gefild
Lindernd deinen Blick,
Wie des Freundes Auge mild
Über mein Geschick. . . .

“Selig, wer sich von der Welt
Ohne Hass verschliesst,
Einen Freund am Busen hält
Und mit dem genießt,

“Was von Menschen nicht gewusst
Oder nicht bedacht,
Durch das Labyrinth der Brust
Wandelt in der Nacht.”

Or that most perfect expression of man's oneness with nature, which he wrote on the wall of a little hut on the Kickelhahn at Ilmenau :

“Über allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch ;
Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde.
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch.”

Or once again, the *Zueignung*—originally part of a larger plan, an epic with the title *Die Geheimnisse*—which now stands at the head of Goethe's collected poems ; and on a more objective plane, the magnificent ballad of *Der Erlkönig*. In such poems we have eloquent testimony to the calming and purifying influence of Charlotte von Stein on the poet.

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The historian of Goethe's literary life cannot, however, afford to restrict himself to the meagre output of these years, the few works that were actually completed ; he must also take into consideration works conceived and largely written then, but which were not given to the world until much later.

Faust in its first form was, no doubt, essentially composed in Frankfort, although we are indebted for our knowledge of it to a copy made by a lady at the Weimar court, Fräulein von Göchhausen. *Egmont*, also, came to Weimar incomplete, and was materially added to in these years, although it is not easy to say exactly when or to what extent. The first new work with which Goethe grappled was a classic tragedy, *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, written for the amateurs of the court and to give Corona Schröter a rôle worthy of her talent ; it was played for the first time in its prose form on April 6th, 1779, Goethe himself impersonating Orestes. If we read the drama, not in the deathless iambics in which it appears in Goethe's works, but in its first prose form, we feel how little, after all, there is to divide it from Goethe's works of the Frankfort time ; only, indeed, the objectivity inherent in a theme drawn from a remote antiquity. Orestes with the unforgivable crime of matricide upon his conscience and the avenging Furies at his heels, is as much a " Storm and Stress " hero as Götz, or Werther, or Clavigo. That *Iphigenie* happened to be a classic drama on a classic theme meant no change of heart in the poet. And it was subjective too ; for it projected as on a large screen Goethe's own mood and experience. Like an Orestes, with, if nothing so terrible as murder on his conscience, at least sins enough of emotional faithlessness—Frederike, Lili—he had fled from Frankfort with the Furies of remorse at

his heels, and in Weimar found his Tauris and his Iphigenia. But it would be to ignore the growing objectivity in Goethe's mind and art to see in this work the same kind of "confession" that *Werther* had been. There is much less of Goethe himself in Orestes than in the heroes of the Frankfort days ; and if Charlotte von Stein stands behind the Greek priestess, an idealisation and transformation has taken place very different from what is to be found in *Götz*, *Clavigo* and *Werther*. Moreover, in studying the genesis of *Iphigenie*, we have to take into account its literary forbears, that revival of the antique which had set in in the late sixties ; Wieland's *Alceste*, the play Goethe had held up to ridicule, had prepared the way ; so, too, had Gluck's epoch-making reform of the opera ; and in his particular way of modernising the ancient conflict Goethe had an immediate predecessor in the French poet, Guimond de la Touche. The greatness of Goethe's drama lies in the poetic beauty of its idea, its subtle interpretation of situation, and its fine delineation of character. In the rôle of the princess, liberating her brother from the burden of his crime, the modern reader is, indeed, tempted to see a presentation of one of those modern processes of mind-cure, which the latest development of the science of psychology has brought with it. But once the Greek Iphigenia and Orestes are given modern souls, they comport themselves with difficulty in the world in which Euripides placed them. The northern imagination and northern ethics were not so easily pressed into the mould created by the ancient poet. Goethe's heroine could not build up her life, as even an immaculate Greek hero might, upon a lie ; if she will retain our sympathies, she must take her stand by the truth. Thus the standpoint of the drama had to be changed. Again,

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a modern-minded Orestes could not obtain absolution by the decree of a god, clothed in the authority of moral dictatorship. The knot must be untied by means of a virtually Christian confession, whereby Orestes regains his peace of mind and rest for his tortured soul. It is true, the critical eye may not find all in order here ; but the flaw lies not in Goethe's adaptation of the Greek tragedy to a modern morality, but rather in his own imperturbable optimistic outlook on life, which had gathered strength in the sure haven of Weimar. This is the fundamental difference which separates *Iphigenie* from the poet's earlier works ; its conciliatory note. Goethe refused to countenance the tragic possibilities of his theme or indeed its tragic inevitableness, seen in the light of a modern ethics. He would not admit that his Orestes could obtain no absolution for his terrible crime ; that Iphigenia could obtain no favour from gods from whom she so irreverently and impiously demanded it ; that a barbarian Thoas could not so easily forgive and forget as Goethe's Thoas with his friendly "Lebt wohl !" Over the whole drama is poured the healing balm of the eighteenth century's humane ideals. Not that this detracts from—it rather enhances—the harmony and beauty of a poem which remains the most spiritually satisfying of all modern remodellings of Greek tragedy. And all its great qualities, save alone that of rhythmic form, are to be found already in *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, as it was conceived and written in these early Weimar years.

The rift between the personality of the artist and his art, which in Goethe's life was to become ever wider, is noticeable in other creations of this time. The drama of *Torquato Tasso* was planned on the basis of the old, largely fictitious biography of the poet by Manso, as presented to

German readers by Jacobi ; possibly also with the help of suggestions from a comedy of Goldoni's. This first Tasso was a legitimate brother of Werther, another "acorn in the costly vase," another outcast of life, who goes down in tragic dissonance. But Tasso was what Werther had not been, a poet ; and this opened up possibilities of a more intimate "confession" than the novel offered. Unfortunately, however, *Tasso* did not get very far at this time, and nothing of the early plan has come down to us. Might it not be inferred that Goethe in his groping towards an objective art, felt that the theme touched the raw of personal suffering and conflict too nearly to allow of completion yet ? Whatever the reason, the tragedy of the "malheur d'être poète" was abandoned, and the *Tasso* we possess was not written until Goethe's experience had been enriched by Italy.

Still another work—and with *Iphigenie auf Tauris* the greatest of these years—links up Goethe's production with *Werther*, the novel of *Wilhelm Meister*, or, as it was called in its first form, *Wilhelm Meisters Theatralische Sendung*. It was begun as early as 1776. In 1910, by a lucky chance, a manuscript copy of the first *Wilhelm Meister* was discovered in Switzerland, and it has now its place in the poet's complete works. The case is parallel to that of the discovery of the early *Faust*, and we have the same difficulty in appraising it at its true value ; for both works in their final form have become so familiar a possession of the German people that they cannot be put aside and forgotten. And yet, if I am not mistaken, there is in *Wilhelm Meisters Theatralische Sendung* a promise—it is only a promise, for the novel is a fragment—of greater harmony in form and contents than Goethe succeeded in achieving when he gave the work its final

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shape. It would be unwise to apply too rigidly in Goethe's case the old adage that first thoughts are best : but it would be equally reprehensible to shut our eyes to the fact that most of his books have suffered from his unfortunate habit of procrastination, which led to their composition being spread over wide periods of time. Second thoughts in a poet may sometimes be deeper and wiser ; but the artistic harmony and unity of his work usually suffer, and may suffer grievously. Without underrating the significance of the pedagogic allegory which Goethe imposed upon his novel in riper years, or denying that the concentration of the *Lehrjahre*, compared with the *Theatralische Sendung*, is to the former's advantage, it must, I think, be frankly recognised that what Goethe added to his book after his return from Italy, is, in respect of vital poetic qualities, much inferior to what he wrote now ; all that is best in it, in the creative sense, is to be found already in the *Theatralische Sendung*. This is a justification for considering the novel at the present stage.

Wilhelm Meisters Theatralische Sendung is a work of much narrower appeal than its successor ; it is a novel about the theatre, and the theatre only. Wilhelm is a youth of the middle class, whose imagination has been stirred as a child by a marionette theatre ; he takes a passionate interest in the stage, which is fanned by a love-affair with a pretty actress. He himself attempts to write plays ; and he studies the history and theory of the drama. He neglects his father's business, and joins a travelling troupe of actors, wherewith the novel slides into the form so congenial to the eighteenth century, the description of a journey interspersed with motley adventures. In the course of these adventures Wilhelm undergoes his apprenticeship to the theatre ; he is brought, perhaps a little

schematically, into touch with its varied aspects and difficulties—its sordid intrigues, its economic difficulties, its dependence on the patronage of the nobility. Wilhelm's idealism is often put to sore tests ; but he steadfastly keeps before him the high aim of ultimately giving his people a national theatre ; and in his own exercise of the art, he aspires to the impersonation of Hamlet. The manuscript breaks off long before Wilhelm is in sight of the goal of his mission, its six books corresponding with only the first four of the completed novel. No doubt, as originally planned, Wilhelm's goal was to have been attained ; but it is just possible that with the new motives which, as the novel proceeded, crept into it, especially with Mignon, that ethereal and—in the sense of a later generation—romantic personification of the poet's longing for Italy, the plan was upset. One begins to suspect that, after all, the dream of a national theatre might have been shown to be a delusion, and the novel have closed with Wilhelm's flight with Mignon to the land of the citron and the orange. This change of plan, if such it was, which was forced upon Goethe by a development of the story not anticipated when he began it, may have been the reason why he was unable to complete it.

Wilhelm Meisters Theatralische Sendung is emphatically a book about real things and real people, quite as real as those of *Werther*. Goethe has not yet to have recourse, as when he took up the novel some fifteen years later, to inventing, in which, like almost all great writers, he often relapses into stultifying artificiality. But whereas *Werther* had come red-hot from him as the immediate reproduction of an experience, *Wilhelm Meisters Sendung* stands upon a more objective plane. Goethe describes here a world that was never his own ; even if his interest in the

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theatre had been awakened by a puppet theatre, he was never, like his Wilhelm, obsessed by a love for the stage ; nor did he aspire—thus early at least—to create a national German theatre. Thus he depicts places and people that were not of his circle, and creates a hero who is less to be identified with himself than Werther. The first book of the old version, describing the child's awakening sense for the theatre, and the young man's first passion for the actress, Madame B——, is an admirably constructed piece of realistic fiction, which has shrunk to modest proportions in the completed romance. The curtailment is, I daresay, a gain, and was, in any case, necessary, as soon as the purpose of the book as a whole was changed ; it must be conceded, too, that Marianne is a more sprightly and engaging figure than when she was still “ Madame B——.” But it would be difficult to say that the *Lehrjahre* has added anything to the artistic conception, and the less leisurely progress of the first book has detracted from the effect of its climax. But all the figures of the motley company which make the artistic strength of the novel, are already here in its early form : Philine and Friedrich ; Mignon and the Harper ; Serlo and Jarno. They underwent some polishing in the revision, by which Philine has certainly benefited ; but I am not sure whether Mignon is not a more delightful creation in the first form, when Goethe seemed to be still unsure whether he should make of her a boy or a girl. In the *Theatralische Sendung*, too, are the deathless poems—*Wer sich der Einsamkeit ergibt, Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt, weiss was ich leide, Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühn*—which invest Mignon and the Harper with such fascinating charm. No poem Goethe ever wrote so completely captured the affection of the world as the last of these :

“ Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühn,
 Im dunkeln Laub die Gold-Orangen glühn,
 Ein sanfter Wind vom blauen Himmel weht,
 Die Myrte still und hoch der Lorbeer steht—
 Kennst du es wohl ? Dahin ! Dahin !
 Möcht’ ich mit dir, o mein Geliebter, ziehn !

“ Kennst du das Haus ? Auf Säulen ruht sein Dach,
 Es glänzt der Saal, es schimmert das Gemach,
 Und Marmorbilder stehn und sehn mich an :
 Was hat man dir, du armes Kind, getan ?
 Kennst du es wohl ? Dahin ! Dahin !
 Möcht’ ich mit dir, o mein Beschützer, ziehn !

“ Kennst du den Berg und seinen Wolkensteg ?
 Das Maultier sucht im Nebel seinen Weg,
 In Höhlen wohnt der Drachen alte Brut,
 Es stürzt der Fels und über ihn die Flut—
 Kennst du ihn wohl ? Dahin ! Dahin !
 Geht unser Weg ! o Vater, lass uns ziehn ! ”

The sordid theatrical world which Goethe describes may appear trivial, compared with its subsequent symbolisation, whereby the stage becomes the world, and the apprenticeship of the hero—who has not been made more likeable or praiseworthy by the change of standpoint—becomes an apprentice to the art of living. But if we will envisage Goethe, not as the teacher and moralist, but as the creative artist, the master of a living art, we cannot but regret that the torso was not completed in the spirit and on the lines on which it was originally conceived. The great advantage of the discovery of the book in its original form is that it enables us for the first time to distinguish how much—or shall we say, how little ?

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—new imaginative matter Goethe superimposed on the old work, in adapting it to his symbolical interpretation of its theme.

The natural sciences played a very large part in Goethe's life ; and it is no idle claim to say that Goethe was the last of the great minds of our race who was at home in the two great fields of intellectual activity, science and poetry, which the nineteenth century, with its enormous strides in scientific discovery, was to separate by an unbridgeable gulf, and an irreconcilable antagonism. In this Goethe was a true son of the eighteenth century, when science, philosophy and poetry lived in amicable intercourse and in mutually helpful comradeship. Poetry, the elder sister, was still the predominant partner ; imagination, disguised as " hypothesis," invaded and fertilised the world of scientific fact ; not, as in later times, when science came of age, and, with disastrous results, turned upon the imagination and deprived it of its wings to soar. This pleasant amity was maintained down into the German Romantic age with admittedly beneficial results ; and indeed, all our modern science stands in a deep debt to the Romantic spirit. Goethe played his part as an interpreter of science by the light of the imagination, and it was a worthy part. He took himself very seriously as a scientist, and with more justification in the eyes of posterity than as a critic of painting and sculpture, or in his own sketches, where he rarely rose above the level of the talented amateur. Modern critics have not stinted in their wonder and appreciation of Goethe's services to science : his presentiment of modern method and progress ; his anticipation of biological evolution.

Of these scientific achievements I shall have more to say, at a later stage, when they arrived at fruition. Mean-

while their beginnings in this first Weimar period have to be chronicled. And these beginnings are significant ; for here one sees plainly Goethe's mode of approach. In the things of the spirit Goethe was, as Schiller was, the first to grasp and formulate, nothing if not a realist ; he at all times put his faith in the validity of phenomena and experience. But this was not strictly true of his scientific studies, and certainly not of their beginnings ; his approach, as perhaps could not be otherwise in a poet, was definitely deductive. It must, however, be said at once that Goethe had little or nothing of value to contribute to science in these early years. Realising how much of a dilettante he was, he—who hated the dilettante in all walks of life—set himself seriously to repair this defect by filling up the gaps in his knowledge. Geology made the first claim on his attention, an attention for which the mines of Ilmenau and his official concern with them were responsible. But he soon found that he could not get very far with the science of geology by mere speculative discussions of the rival merits of Buffon's "vulcanism" and Saussure's "neptunism." He saw the need of a knowledge of chemistry—a different thing from the alchemistic experimenting of his adolescence—and of astronomy. The latter science made a difficult demand upon him : a knowledge of mathematics, the one science with which his great intellect refused to grapple. In the geological field his one contribution of interest in this period was the essay *Ueber den Granit*, which might well find a place in an anthology of Goethe's prose, although of little value from the standpoint of science. On the whole, indeed, geology and mineralogy were the sciences to which Goethe was able to contribute least.

More significant were his beginnings in anatomy.

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With the help of the Jena anatomist Loder, he mastered the structure of the human frame ; and even thus early caught a glimpse of the great idea of a comparative anatomy, and the corollary it involved of development and continuity in the organic world. In his first anatomical treatise, his *Versuch aus der vergleichenden Knochenlehre, dass der Zwischenknochen der oberen Kinnlade dem Menschen mit den übrigen Tieren gemein sei* (*Essay in Comparative Anatomy showing that the Intermaxillary Bone of the Upper Jaw is common to Man and the other Animals*), laid one of the foundation stones of this new science. The value of Goethe's discovery of the rudimentary intermaxillary bone in man may be exaggerated ; what does matter in Goethe's demonstration is not so much that it is true, as the idea of biological evolution that lies behind it.

There was a dark side—now as always—to these scientific pursuits of Goethe's : a certain incompatibility, even antagonism, between his scientific and his literary activity. It may be that he only turned to science when poetic inspiration left him in the lurch ; but it may also be that science was at times responsible for failing inspiration and the neglect of poetry. And to us who look to Goethe, not for scientific discovery, an activity with which many other minds were far better able to cope successfully than his, but to those more precious discoveries in the realm of the spirit and the imagination, such thoughts awaken something of a jealous grudge that these studies took up so large a share of his time.

No doubt, whether science is to be held responsible for it or not, as the Weimar period drew to a close, a certain impotency of the imagination crept over Goethe. There were other disturbing forces at work. He was growing visibly restive and unhappy ; a gnawing discontent, an

increasing disillusionment set in with this little state, which had showered upon him its highest honours and saddled him with its responsibilities. He was growing very impatient of the irritating limitations these imposed upon him. Moreover, having successfully educated his master from an awkward hobbledehoy, who delighted in the coarsest horseplay, into a ruler who was beginning to take his rulership seriously, Goethe became apprehensively conscious that a rift had opened up between them. Karl August did not, in fact, develop into an ideal ruler after Goethe's heart and pattern. No sooner, indeed, did the idea of rulership take possession of him, than it assumed the dangerous form of ambitions which his little state was unable, materially or financially, to support. The duke always dreamed of playing a bigger rôle in German and European politics than was allotted to him, or his resources permitted. In particular, he developed military ambitions which were to prove peculiarly disastrous at a later date. Against Goethe's wiser counsels Karl August let himself be drawn into the orbit of Frederick the Great. That monarch came forward as a champion of the unity of the Empire against the disintegrating insubordination of the Austrian emperor, Joseph II, and Karl August pressed for an espousal of the Prussian cause. Goethe was not at all enamoured of Frederick's political ambitions, and he tried to convince the duke that the most prudent course was to keep free from all such entanglements. He tried to show him that his true rôle as a ruler was to be a patron of learning and a Maecenas of the arts. But this was not at all to Karl August's taste ; he was more at home with his tiny army than with his poets ; and he had his way. A gulf opened up between the ruler and his poet-minister

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which nothing in future years ever bridged. Prussia, meanwhile, played the part of the wily tempter. She helped the duke out of his chronic money difficulties, he being always reprehensibly extravagant. The upshot was that on August 29th, 1785, a treaty was signed whereby Weimar entered the Fürstenbund under Prussian leadership. This step was responsible for much of Goethe's growing restlessness.

Nearly ten years—years that might have been the most fruitful of Goethe's life—had been wasted in the trivial round of dilettante statesmanship, artificial and paralysing social etiquette and empty pleasures of a petty court, of whose politics he could not now even approve. The other tie that bound him to Weimar was weakening too, even if he hardly yet admitted it to himself: his love for Charlotte von Stein. That love had carried him over many a dead point and softened many a disappointment, but it was now beginning to wear threadbare; there came moments when he saw it plainly for what it was: a dalliance in that sentimental eroticism which was one of the conspicuous diseases of the age. Escape he must, if he would not renounce for ever that poetic mission which, he felt, was placed upon his shoulders; if he would ever bring to completion that pyramid which he had once fondly thought he could build on Weimar soil. He must wrench himself free from the provincial rut, if he would become, as in his growing strength he felt he might become, a great European among Europeans.

Such was the prelude to the flight to Italy.

Chapter Six

ITALY

Goethe's journey to Italy was the greatest event of his life. Nothing that ever happened to him involved such many-sided and far-reaching issues, both for his personality and his productive work. It was the realisation of a longing that had been first stirred in him as a child by the pictures of Rome that hung in his father's house in Frankfurt. Twice he had looked down towards Italy from the heights of the St. Gotthard, and one other time he had actually been on his way thither, when the Duke of Weimar's envoy had summoned him back to Weimar.

There is tragedy enough that a poet of Goethe's European mind should have been born into a world so narrow and provincial as the Germany of his day ; but it was a greater tragedy that he should have so long and so complacently acquiesced in his lot. But at last, and with growing urgency, the conviction was borne home to him that Weimar with all its pleasant security was but a prison-house of the spirit. He felt that he must shake himself free from its narrowness while there was yet time ; launch out into a wider stream of European life, if he would himself live. " I am healed," he wrote from Rome, " from a monstrous passion and sickness. Had I not taken the resolution which I am now carrying out, I should have perished and become incapable of achieving anything. Rather dead than live again as in these last

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years !” But was it not already too late ? Was the flight to Italy after all more than an illusory attempt to achieve a freedom, so often before aspired to, and now irremediably beyond his grasp ? Was in the end Weimar’s provincialism not Goethe’s tragic fate ?

Goethe’s journey to Italy was, indeed, a flight. After having, on the day preceding his departure, obtained the duke’s consent to an indefinite leave of absence, he stole away from Karlsbad, where he had been spending the months of July and August. This was on September 3rd, 1786. Under an assumed name—no one knew of his intentions except his secretary—he set out in all haste by way of Regensburg to Munich ; and from Munich he hurried on to Innsbruck and the Brenner Pass. After a brief rest on the summit, the journey was continued “with terrific speed,” and in the darkness of the night through glorious mountain scenery which might well have tempted the most insensitive of travellers to linger, down into Italy. Goethe seemed haunted by the fear that a courier might overtake him and the realisation of his plans once more be thwarted ; indeed, he did not venture to write even to the duke and Charlotte until he had reached Verona. As the southern beauty of the valley of the Adige unfolded itself to him in the dawn, his delight was unbounded. And what a joy to hear on all lips the liquid Italian speech, with which he had been familiar since his childhood ! He was in Trento a bare week after he had left Karlsbad ; and on the shores of the Lago di Garda he put the first strokes to his final revision of *Iphigenie auf Tauris*. Verona was reached on September 16th, and its amphitheatre, the first great monument of antiquity he set eyes on, held him a willing and entranced prisoner for several days. In Vicenza he was held longer by the

strange fascination which the architecture of Palladio—in our modern eyes no genius of a higher order—exercised upon him. There was, indeed, something ominous in this unholy experience that befell him on the threshold of Italy ; for Palladio seemed to narrow down and warp his whole outlook on Italian art, to put those classic blinkers on his eyes which he wore to the last. From Vicenza he passed to Padua, where a palm tree threw a new light for him on the problem of plant metamorphosis, and then to Venice. “It was written on my page in the book of fate that on September 28th, 1786, I should see Venice for the first time.” But even Venice soon began to pall ; it was not the goal ; and after seventeen days here the journey was continued. The attraction of the great magnet, Rome, proved the more irresistible, the nearer he approached it ; he felt no rest until he had set foot in the “capital of the world.” The feverishness with which he had set out returned with redoubled force ; through Ferrara, Bologna, across the Apennines, with only the briefest of pauses, the journey was continued. Perugia and Terni were rushed through—even for Florence he could spare but three hours ! “If I yielded to my impatience, I should look at nothing on the way, and only hasten forwards. Another fourteen days and the longing of thirty years will be stilled ! And I hardly feel yet that it is possible !” And again : “I have still three days to travel, and it seems as if I should never get there.” From early dawn to late in the night he travelled on, not even taking time to take off his clothes to sleep. “Rome ! Rome ! Two nights more, and if the angel of the Lord does not bar our way, we shall be there !” And then to Charlotte von Stein : “Yes, I am at last in the capital of the world. My second word shall be directed to you,

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after I have fervently thanked Heaven for having brought me hither." "Now I am here, and calm, calm as it would now seem, for the rest of my life." "From now begins, I may well say, a new life ; I now see with my own eyes the whole, of which I had only known before the parts. I behold now in living form all the dreams of my youth." "From the day I entered Rome I count a second birthday, a rebirth." And indeed Rome was still, in the eighteenth century, the capital and mistress of the world ; her domination was none the less real because it had ceased to be political, ceased also for the northerner to be spiritual ; for she was the symbol of that century's dream of a golden age of taste ; the portal to the classic beauty of antiquity.

Goethe's first residence in Rome lasted nearly four months, busy months spent in methodical and systematic sight-seeing ; guide-book in hand, he visited all that was to be seen. Meanwhile he maintained his incognito and kept—an unusual thing for him—very much to himself ; his intercourse in Rome was restricted to the little circle of German artists, chief among them J. H. W. Tischbein, who painted the familiar picture of him sitting like a pasha among the ruins of Rome, and later, Angelica Kauffmann. He made the acquaintance of the painter-poet, Friedrich, or, as he was usually called, Maler Müller, of Heinrich Meyer, the Swiss art-historian, who was to become so intimate a friend of his later years, and of Karl Philipp Moritz, whose work on German prosody was helpful to him in putting the final rhythmic polish on his *Iphigenie auf Tauris*. That work was completed on the 12th of December. Apart from the task of revising and completing his earlier writings for publication, Goethe's main and, indeed, sole interest in Rome was art ; this was what had drawn him to Italy. "On this journey "

he had written in his diary before he left, "I hope to calm my mind concerning the fine arts, stamp their holy image deep on my soul, and preserve it for quiet enjoyment."

On February 21st, 1787, Goethe, accompanied by Tischbein, set out for Naples, where he spent over a month, luxuriating in the sunshine and taking delight in the naive life of the people. His scientific interests led him no less than three times to make the ascent of Vesuvius ; and looking out on the Bay of Naples, the great thought first flashed upon him that all the organs of the plant were but modifications of the leaf as it appears in the first cotyledons. Pompeii, the existence of which had only been discovered some twenty years before, opened a new chapter in Goethe's knowledge of antiquity. From Naples he crossed to Palermo, with, as travelling companion, the early fragment of his drama of *Tasso* ; in Sicily he read the *Odyssey* with new understanding, and planned a Homeric drama round the figure of Nausicaa. But again it was the luxuriant bounty of Sicily that impressed him most deeply ; Sicily the granary of Rome interested him more than the beauty of the Sicilian towns. In the middle of May he was back again in Naples, and a few weeks later, he had settled down to his second residence in Rome, which lasted from June until the April of the following year, 1788. Here *Egmont* was finished, *Torquato Tasso* planned in its new form ; and in the gardens of the Villa Borghese was written that very un-Italian scene of *Faust*, the "Witches' Kitchen," where Faust finds the rejuvenation his creator had himself undergone under the Italian sun. In Rome Goethe enjoyed his freedom to the full ; he gave himself up to life's pleasures with an abandon impossible at home ; for free

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enough as Weimar was in its countenance of mild amours, it was governed by a straight-laced enough etiquette. There were many light-o'-loves in Goethe's Roman life ; and for one, "the fair Milanese," a certain Maddalena Riggi, or Ricci, he seems for a time to have cherished something of the more sentimental passion of his youth.

But the break had at last to come, and on the 21st of April, 1788, in passionate sorrow and regret, Goethe left the Eternal City by the Porta dei Popoli, by which he had first entered it eighteen months before. He journeyed back by way of Florence, where he made amends for his hasty flight through it on the outward journey ; and in Milan he completed his conversion to the gospel of classic beauty by a final repudiation of that Gothic, which in earlier life had opened up to him such wide spiritual horizons ; Milan Cathedral is now to him merely "a mountain of marble in the most tasteless shapes." He travelled across the Splügen into Switzerland, and then, by way of Constance, Augsburg and Nürnberg, back to Weimar. On the evening of June 18th, 1788, he was home again. Such is, in brief outline, the story of Goethe's journey to Italy.

More than a quarter of century later Goethe put together out of his letters to Charlotte von Stein and Herder and his Diary, the volumes of his works which bear the title *Italienische Reise*. This is a collection of documents which bear witness to Goethe's many-sided interests ; it is, in parts, as delightful a record of travel as one could wish to read. But it is not so much a book as materials for a book ; and although Goethe gave it the sub-title *Aus meinem Leben*, it cannot be regarded as, in any real sense, a continuation of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. The *Italienische Reise* is, in fact, just lacking in that quality

which makes the Autobiography so precious to us, namely, its "Dichtung," its power of rising superior to the facts and distilling from them their spiritual essence ; it is not *the* book we should have liked Goethe to write about the culminating experience of his life.

As his account of his visit to Switzerland in 1780 already testified, Goethe was a good traveller ; "zum Sehen geboren," he had in a high degree the power of seeing things as they were ; and this objective vision reaches its full power in Italy. He gave himself up without reservations or prepossessions to the impression of the moment ; he never failed to establish the bond of sympathy between himself and the people among whom he moved, sharing their outlook and entering into their life. But our pleasure in the *Italienische Reise* is tempered by impatience with its many tedious pages ; it is often disappointingly informative about many matters which we would rather seek and could easily find in guide-book or encyclopedia. A monument to Goethe's wide sympathies, it suffers, too, from the discursiveness such latitude brings with it. We pass confusingly from scientific record to art criticism, from observation to often irrelevant enough reflections. There is a kind of latent struggle throughout the book between science and art—the old dualism of Goethe's mind in still another form. And the record of scientific facts has, on the whole, the advantage ; it encroaches more and more as the work progresses. To the sensitive reader it comes, for instance, as a douche of cold water, when, after having his expectations raised to a high pitch by the feverish haste of Goethe's journey to Rome, he is treated to a mere dull record, such as any traveller might make, of a round of sight-seeing. With all respect for Goethe's marvellous and saving interest in

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concrete things, we feel again and again how willingly we would have sacrificed his matter-of-fact accounts of his travels for more enlightenment on the spiritual significance of Italy to him. It is not the traveller's notes we seek from Goethe, but the co-ordinating and harmonising vision of the artist and the poet. How willingly would we have done without much of what he tells us of his days in Venice, albeit it contains shrewd observation of men and things, had Goethe vouchsafed to reveal to us all that it meant to him when, from the tower of St. Mark he, for the first time in his life, set eyes upon the sea—the open sea ! How gladly we should have welcomed it had he, instead of in leisurely detail describing to us the Roman carnival, told us of the new spiritual horizons he owed to Rome ! We should have liked to hear more of the inspiring beauty of Sicily, which brought Homer near to him as never before, and less statistics of Sicily's contribution to the economic wealth of Italy.

There is disappointment, too, in store for us when we face honestly, not merely what Goethe tells us of Italy, but what he has to tell. His journey to the south was, like his own Faust's, a quest for an ideal beauty ; but he entered this Land of Promise with strangely limited vision, limited by his own humanistic education and justified by the classic tastes of the Weimar court. He, the heir of centuries of humanism, went to Italy, like Winkelmann before him, burdened with all the pre-conceptions of his century ; he went, not to seek, but to find the glory that was Rome ; and apart from his pleasure in the sunshine and the Italian people, he had little eye for anything but the vestiges of antiquity. To us moderns, who have seen Italy in the light of another century, and of a wide and catholic romanticism, the

reflection is inevitable : how very little of Italy and Italy's art Goethe actually did see! The resplendent Italy of the Renaissance was a closed book to him ; it is true, he speaks with warm admiration of Michelangelo and Raphael ; but the great quality in these masters which he appreciated was their fulfilment of the promise of antiquity. It was the same kind of antiquity-ridden appreciation which Lessing had shown for Shakespeare. One has, indeed, sometimes the impression that Goethe, confronted with the riot of colour in the Italian painters, was colour-blind ; certainly, insensitive to it. All his life long Goethe's outlook on art was sombrely influenced by the grey tradition which studied its supreme beauty through the medium of austere engravings and marble-cold statuary. The great house in Weimar was full of such things.

And for a poet how little the great poetry of Italy meant to Goethe ! For Dante, we know, he always had an aversion ; this was a natural consequence of his pagan dislike of the ascetic, which prejudiced him against so much of the religious art of Italy. Even Ariosto and Tasso seem, as far as the record of the *Italienische Reise* goes, to have meant little more to him than they had meant to Addison at the beginning of the century. His reading of Italian books, his visits to Italian theatres, are rarely recorded, and then with little understanding or warmth ; they clearly touched no responsive chord in his own poetic nature. He spent days in Verona, without ever remembering that two of the immortal lovers of all poetry had shed a lustre on that city before which even the Amphitheatre itself grew pale ; and when he visited Ferrara, he was content to set down a few guide-book phrases about its literary past, even forgetting that he had

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in his trunk the beginnings of a drama which was concerned with that very past.

To the duke of Weimar Goethe wrote : " In these eighteen months of solitude I have found myself. But in what sense ? As an artist." But surely he was under a delusion here, or his conception of "artist" was only envisaged in its theoretic and critical aspect. Had he said : In Italy I have stripped myself of the confusing and disturbing naiveté of my earlier poetic method, and disciplined myself in objectivity ; I have broken with the unbridled realism that found expression in my former works ; I have repudiated the fantastic absurdities of the Gothic and all that was Gothic in me, and taken to my heart the sublimer art of Michelangelo and Palladio ; I have lived down my confused German past, and acquired the possession of a pellucid classic art—all that would have been true. But that the renunciation of this past meant "finding himself" as an artist was, as the barren years that were to come only too plainly show, an unfounded hope. Rather might we say that the Goethe who believed that he had at last entered into the Holy of Holies of the artist's calling, ceased from now on to be a creative artist at all. Thus for Goethe the poet the Italian journey was not an unmixed blessing ; it would have been truer had he told his duke that in Italy he had found himself as a man of science. The palm tree of the Padua garden that set him thinking about the metamorphosis of plants, a specimen of mica spath, the structure of the lava of Vesuvius, meant more for him than all Italy's poetry. It is significant that one of the most promising conceptions of the Italian period, the drama of *Nausikaa*, should have had in Palermo to yield before the superior claims of a botanical theory : " My good poetic

intention was disturbed ; the garden of Alcinous disappeared, and a world garden opened before me." With all respect for Goethe's scientific zeal and achievement, one cannot help adding : The pity of it !

These are disappointing aspects of Goethe's Italian journey. But his record of it is not to be thus negatively dismissed. The truth is, it was with Goethe in Italy much as it had been with his own Wilhelm Meister : he went out to seek his father's asses, and he found a kingdom ; went out to find the realisation of classic beauty, and found—himself. The true significance of this supreme event of his life has to be read between the lines of the printed pages. In Italy Goethe attained an objectivity in his attitude to his own personality that he had never known before. He was able to look upon himself—as once he had imagined that he saw his double in the mist at Sesenheim—as a being apart. Free from Weimar ties and Weimar provincialism, he stood upon a vantage-ground from which he saw backwards upon his past, weighing and judging, and forwards into his future, planning and hoping. His spiritual and intellectual life was ordered and stabilised ; the confusing emotional factor was, if not eliminated, at least subdued ; he attained at last a vision of that harmony in the greatest of all the arts, the art of living, which had ever been his goal, and was to be his goal until the end. The Italian journey has to be looked upon, not as the opening of a new epoch in the poet's life, but rather as the culmination and the close of the process of liberation from subjectivity, which had set in already in his Weimar years. In Italy Goethe made up the reckoning of his past and, that reckoning closed, he was able resolutely to face the future. The attainment of inner harmony, the conciliation of the two souls within

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his breast, the elimination of disturbing "personal equations," were thus the greatest gains Goethe owed to Italy. From now on he no longer lived unreflectively, "naively," in the moment, but consciously and with wise foresight; subjective individualism has given place in him to impersonal objectivity.

In spite of the wealth of new experiences that crowded on Goethe in Italy, there is very little to chronicle in respect of new literary plans or works; the poetic conceptions that did occupy his mind—*Iphigenie in Delphi*, *Nausikaa*—did not get beyond the initial stages; it was clearly much harder for Goethe to bring anything new to completion now than even in the early Weimar days. Instead, he busied himself with his older uncompleted works, and that under pressure from without; for, before leaving Germany, he had made arrangements with a publisher for the issue of an edition of his writings. Here at least, we rejoice to see, the instinct of the poet asserted itself over the dead hand of antiquity and the living hand of science. *Egmont*, that political drama which had been begun in his days of Shakespearean enthusiasm, and had benefited by the staid political experience acquired by the poet as minister of state in Weimar, received in Rome its finishing touches. *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, also, as we have seen, conceived in that early time, had vacillated between prose and verse, without receiving the stamp of finality; and now it was taken in hand with a new enthusiasm born of immediate contact with the great monuments of antiquity. There is surprisingly little difference in respect of treatment or even words, between the *Iphigenie* of 1779 and that of 1787. The elimination, or apparent elimination of the turbulent element has been effected almost alone by the magic of rhythmic form, by

the transformation of the original prose into deathless Italian iambics that leave no stain. The scene, as it now stands, of Orestes' vision when he believes he has descended to the underworld, is, I often think, the noblest poetic conception that ever came from Goethe's brain ; the passing of all earthly hates and evils in the life beyond the grave ; one of the most inspiring fruits of the poet's optimism :

“Welch ein Gelispel hör' ich in den Zweigen,
 Welch ein Geräusch aus jener Dämmerung säuseln ?—
 Sie kommen schon, den neuen Gast zu sehn !
 Wer ist die Schar, die herrlich miteinander
 Wie ein versammelt Fürstenhaus sich freut ?
 Sie gehen friedlich, Alt' und Junge, Männer
 Mit Weibern ; göttergleich und ähnlich scheinen
 Die wandelnden Gestalten. Ja, sie sind's,
 Die Ahnherrn meines Hauses !—Mit Thyesten
 Geht Atreus in vertraulichen Gesprächen ;
 Die Knaben schlüpfen scherzend um sie her.
 Ist keine Leidenschaft hier mehr unter euch ?
 Verlosch die Rache wie das Licht der Sonne ?
 So bin auch ich willkommen, und ich darf
 In euren feierlichen Zug mich mischen.”

And then Orestes' jubilant paean of hope when he grasps that he is still among the living :

“O lasst mich auch in meiner Schwester Armen,
 An meines Freundes Brust, was ihr mir gönnt,
 Mit vollem Dank geniessen und behalten !
 Es löset sich der Fluch, mir sagt's das Herz.
 Die Eumeniden ziehn, ich höre sie,
 Zum Tartarus und schlagen hinter sich

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Die ehrnen Tore fernabdonnernd zu.
Die Erde dampft erquickenden Geruch
Und ladet mich auf ihren Flächen ein,
Nach Lebensfreud' und grosser Tat zu jagen."

Torquato Tasso is a much more personal work than *Iphigenie*. As planned and began in Weimar, it had, as we have seen, linked up with *Werther*, a fact which Goethe himself emphasised in later years ; its theme, the relation of the artist to art and life, is—in a very different form, it is true—the theme of *Wilhelm Meister*. Moreover, the situation of the Italian poet at the court of Ferrara offered many opportunities for interpretation in the light of Goethe's own experiences at the Weimar court. To Eckermann, who asked him what was the "idea" of *Tasso*, he once said : "Idea ? What can I say ? I had Tasso's life ; I had my own life, and in combining two such strange figures, the conception of Tasso arose in my mind. I gave him as prosaic contrast Antonio, for whom I had also no lack of models. As for the other circumstances of court, of life and love, they were to be found in Weimar as in Ferrara, and I can with justice say of my production that it is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." But in its early form, of which no reliable account has been preserved, *Tasso* did not advance very far ; and Goethe was confronted with a harder task to complete it in Italy than in the case of any of the other torsos, except *Faust*, which he had brought with him. The stimulus to take it in hand again was not, as might have been expected, the Italian milieu in which he found himself—it will be remembered how completely he had forgotten his play when he visited Ferrara on the journey to Rome—but rather his reading of the Life of Tasso, published

by Pier Antonio Serassi in 1787, which provided him with a wealth of Italian colour and with poetic motives better suited to his purpose than the sentimentalities of the older traditions. He made few studies for *Tasso* in Italy which he could not have equally easily made from books at home ; and the drama was only finished in 1790, two years after his return. And yet *Tasso*, together with one other work, also mainly written in Weimar, the *Römische Elegien*, must always be associated in our minds with the Italian Goethe. Here is consequently the place to speak of them.

None of Goethe's imaginative creations is so intimately bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh as *Tasso* ; in none does he lift the veil from his personality and his poetic genius as here ; as a confession of the poet's inner life, it is the frankest and the subtlest he has left us. But just as this has made it the most delicately harmonised of all his longer poems, so it has suffered most from the wide gap that lay between its beginning and its end. The gulf that separated the unbalanced sentimentalist, the second Werther, hopelessly and tragically distraught, and the Tasso conceived in the spirit of the Italian Goethe—matured, his early illusions shattered—was as unbridgeable as the gulf that separated the Frankfort Faust from the Faust of the completed First Part of the drama. The early Tasso, no doubt, went down in unrelieved tragedy ; the second Tasso must—so felt the optimistic, conciliatory Goethe of Italy and the middle years—like Faust, be saved. And the effort to graft upon a tragic Tasso a redeemed Tasso failed more disastrously—if only because his world was more restricted and more intimate—than the same process as applied with the aid of allegory to Faust. We are shown Tasso here at the moment when he has completed

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his *Gerusalemme liberata* ; we see his morbid susceptibility wounded by the overbearing taunts of the man of the world, his duke's statesman Antonio Montecatino. The two ladies of the court, the duke's sister, the Princess Leonora, and the Countess Leonora San Vitale, two exquisitely graceful figures, pour balm upon his wound ; the duke himself endeavours to be the wise arbiter of the poet's fate. All conspire to "educate" Tasso, to cure his morbid sensitiveness and "Schwärmerei,"

"dass er mehr
Sich selbst genieße, mehr sich zu genießen
Den andern geben könne."

But the poet's fatal lack of balance crosses their good intentions. He offends in every way ; draws his sword upon his adversary ; takes the princess to his arms in a passionate embrace. Goethe would fain have us believe that his hero in the end is saved—saved by the precious gift of poetry :

"Und wenn der Mensch in seiner Qual verstummt,
Gab mir ein Gott, zu sagen wie ich leide——"

that the buffetings to which his sensitive nature is exposed have moulded him, and made him—a motive surely foreign to the first plan—the master of his fate. The handclasp of his quondam enemy, who could by no means be so easily converted as Mephistopheles into a spirit, who "always wills the evil and always achieves the good" is but a dramatic symbol of the great illusion with which the drama closes : the belief that it means the turning over of a new leaf in Tasso's distraught life. They are brave and beautiful words which are put upon the lips of the broken poet :

“ O edler Mann ! Du stehst fest und still,
 Ich scheine nur die sturmbewegte Welle.
 Allein bedenk', und überhebe nicht
 Dich deiner Kraft ! Die mächtige Natur,
 Die diesen Felsen gründete, hat auch
 Der Welle die Beweglichkeit gegeben.
 Sie sendet ihren Sturm, die Welle flieht
 Und schwankt und schwillt und beugt sich schäumend
 über.

In dieser Woge spiegelte so schön
 Die Sonne sich, es ruhten die Gestirne
 An dieser Brust, die zärtlich sich bewegte.
 Verschwunden ist der Glanz, entflohn die Ruhe.
 Ich kenne mich in der Gefahr nicht mehr,
 Und schäme mich nicht mehr es zu bekennen.
 Zerbrochen ist das Steuer, und es kracht
 Das Schiff an allen Seiten. Berstend reisst
 Der Boden unter meinen Füßen auf !
 Ich fasse dich mit beiden Armen an !
 So klammert sich der Schiffer endlich noch
 An Felsen fest, an dem er scheitern sollte.”

But a tragic issue is surely as inevitable as if the prison doors of the hospital of St. Anna had closed upon him, as they closed on Tasso in real life. Goethe's new reflective optimism is in conflict with his old realism ; but the inexorable logic of the facts of life still triumphs over his constructive interpretation of them. The impression which the drama leaves behind it is one, not of conciliation, but tragedy. And yet in spite of the discordance due to changing plans, *Tasso* remains a great poem, set forth in verse of unforgettable cadence and richer in winged words than any other work of the poet's except *Faust*.

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Literature possesses no more exquisite and subtle soul-drama than this.

To us moderns *Iphigenie auf Tauris* and *Torquato Tasso*, together with *Faust*, are the ripest and most satisfying of all Goethe's works. The allegiance of Goethe's readers may change with advancing years, but to these dramas they can never be faithless. If perfection of rhythmic form is, as it is so often said, the surest passport to immortality, *Iphigenie* and *Tasso* cannot die.

The other work on which the stamp of Italy is deeply graven is the collection of twenty *Römische Elegien*; they, too, were largely written when Italy had ceased to be an immediate experience and had become a memory. They embody, moreover, erotic experiences which, as will be seen, belong to Weimar, and only by poetic licence are grafted on to Goethe's Roman life. But the *ars amoris* is still Roman; passion is here a naive, sensuous, unsentimental thing, such as rarely, in so naked a form, flamed up in Goethe's life. It is, indeed, a far cry from the love of Werther to that of the Roman Goethe! No work of our poet has so purely Latin a stamp as this—Latin alike in its classic form and equally classic contents. All that Goethe owed to the "capital of the world," its revelation to him of unperturbed serenity and classic beauty, is concentrated here:

"O wieühl' ich in Rom mich so froh; gedenk' ich der
Zeiten,

Da mich ein graulicher Tag hinten im Norden
umfing,

Trübe der Himmel und schwer auf meine Scheitel sich
senkte,

Farb- und gestaltlos die Welt um den ermatteten lag,

Und ich über mein Ich, des unbefriedigten Geistes
 Düstre Wege zu spähn, still in Betrachtung ver-
 sank.

Nun umleuchtet der Glanz des helleren Aethers die
 Stirne ;

Phöbus rufet, der Gott, Formen und Farben
 hervor.

Sternhell glänzet die Nacht, sie klingt von weichen
 Gesängen,

Und mir leuchtet der Mond heller als nordischer
 Tag.

Welche Seligkeit ward mir Sterblichem ! Träum' ich ?
 Empfänget

Dein ambrosisches Haus, Jupiter Vater, den
 Gast ?

Ach ! hier lieg' ich, und strecke nach deinen Knieen die
 Hände

Flehend aus. O vernimm, Jupiter Xenius,
 mich ! ”

Chapter Seven

AGAIN IN WEIMAR

The freedom of Italy was over ; Goethe returned with extreme reluctance to Weimar ; and had it not been for economic pressure, he would probably not have returned so soon. After the happiness and hopefulness of the months in the south, when, in self-detachment, he had looked backwards and forwards, had seen his life, as it were, mapped out beneath him ; after the delight with which he had revelled in the objectivity and clarity of antique beauty, disappointment with his German home was inevitable. The disappointment was the greater, as Goethe's wonted prescience and foresight seemed to have deserted him ; he did not fairly conjure up to himself the peculiar disillusionment which Weimar had in store for him. He had forgotten that the old friends at home could not have moved and grown with him, and would be necessarily out of sympathy with him. The letter—a quotation has already been made from it—which Goethe wrote to the duke before his return, shows plainly that Goethe cherished hopes of Weimar which it could not realise :

“ My desire—with this strange, unsubduable spirit of mine, which even in perfect freedom and in the moment of enjoying the earnestly desired good fortune, has brought me many a sorrow—my desire is, at your side, among your subjects, in your land, to find myself again, to cast up the

account of my journey, and to gather together in the last three volumes of my works, the mass of many memories of life and my meditations on art. I can say to be sure : ‘ In these eighteen months’ solitude I *have* found myself ’ ; but in what sense ? ‘ As an artist.’ All that I am over and above the artist it will be for you to criticise and further. By your continuous active life you, as I can see from all your letters, have been always widening and refining your knowledge of the uses that can be made of men ; I submit myself gladly to your judgment. Receive me as a guest, let me by your side fill out the whole measure of my existence and enjoy life ; and thus my force will be like a newly-tapped, concentrated, purified spring easy to guide from its source hither or thither as you desire.”

Thus hopefully he wrote ; but he did not realise to himself how difficult it would be, after Rome, to reconcile himself to the narrower world of Weimar, even if the duke relieved him—as he magnanimously did—from the tedious round of official duties. As the truth forced itself upon him, a sense of emptiness, a blighting discontent took possession of him, difficult to explain in a poet of supreme genius in the prime of life. “ From Italy so rich in form,” he wrote, “ I had returned to a formless Germany, to exchange a serene sky for a gloomy one ; my friends, instead of consoling me and drawing me to them again, brought me to despair. My delight in very remote things, my suffering, my lament over all that I had lost seemed to hurt them ; I missed all sympathy ; no one understood my language.” Goethe turned his back on life ; retired in proud, disconsolate self-sufficiency into himself. The biographer is not prepared for the collapse, or, at least, the sustained collapse under which Goethe suffered in these years ; and the whole period that lies

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between 1788 and the beginning of the friendship with Schiller in 1794 is something of a psychological enigma. Its solution is perhaps to be sought outside Goethe's personality, in the conditions to which he returned, in his own distractions, and in that general out-of-jointness of a world which stood on the brink of the great Revolution. Whatever was its root cause, Goethe in these years passed, indeed, into the winter of his discontent—paralysing discontent; it came over him like a premature climacteric which dulled his poetic faculties, an experience he had known in no other period of his life. For although to this time we owe the completion of *Tasso*, as well as the *Römische Elegien*, these were no fresh imaginings, but rather the rounding-off of the great Italian experience. Perhaps the most vivid testimony to the jaundice that crept over Goethe was that, when, two years later, he had the opportunity of revisiting the Italy of his heart's desire, he found himself unable to recall the first fine rapture of his earlier journey.

Goethe had ceased, in accordance with his wish, to take an active part, as member of the Council, in the government of the state; but he still remained, behind the scenes, the trusted councillor of the duke himself. In an informal way, indeed, he was consulted about most things, his advice being particularly sought with regard to the reform of the university of Jena, in the rebuilding of the castle, and in everything that concerned the arts. Ultimately when, in 1791, the duke established his court theatre, Goethe was induced to be its director. The irony of Goethe's adage: "What one desires in youth, age brings in abundance" is to be seen in the fact that when this opportunity was given to him to realise the dream of his early *Wilhelm Meister*, that dream had ceased to have

any very vital interest to him. It is not possible to say much that is favourable of his theatre management in these years ; his means were, no doubt, limited and his actors inadequate ; but the repertory he provided was not conspicuously different from that of other German theatres of the day. The Goethe of 1791 was in no mood to be a reformer.

His dissatisfaction with Weimar politics was as great as ever. The martial zeal which had drawn the duke into the wake of Prussia was increasingly distasteful to him as its detrimental effects upon the little state became the more apparent. To this were added friction and discord within the ducal house, when the duke took to himself an English mistress ; and Goethe's powers of mediation and conciliation were put to a severe strain. The little that Weimar could offer in the way of sympathetic cultured intercourse was deprived of its main attraction, when, shortly after Goethe's return, Herder set out on his Italian journey. And Charlotte von Stein ?

We have seen how Goethe's love for Charlotte, already overripe in 1787, had been gradually dying in Italy ; the more earthly passions to which he had given himself up there, had reduced it to the temperate level of a friendship. But once back in Weimar Goethe felt that this friendship, like all else in Weimar, was a turned page in his life ; in the new consciousness of his own spiritual strength, which he had acquired in the south, he had no further need for such companionship as Charlotte had to give him. This isolation made him peculiarly vulnerable to a new attack by Eros, his old enemy. One day, only a few weeks after his return from Italy, a young girl, Christiane Vulpius, accosted him in the park and presented him with a petition on behalf of her brother, a struggling littérateur

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who hoped for help from Goethe's influence. The daughter of a minor town official, she eked out a scanty livelihood by making artificial flowers. To the surprise and scandal of Weimar society Goethe took Christiane into his garden house as his mistress and subsequently established her in the mansion on the Frauenplan. It was clearly a case of quite earthly attraction that led the poet to transfer this "forest flower" from the wilds to his own trim garden :

"Ich ging im Walde
So für mich hin,
Und nichts zu suchen,
Das war mein Sinn.

"Im Schatten sah ich
Ein Blümchen stehn,
Wie Sterne leuchtend,
Wie Aeuglein schön.

"Ich wollt' es brechen,
Da sagt' es fein :
Soll ich zum Welken
Gebrochen sein ?

"Ich grub's mit allen
Den Würzlein aus,
Zum Garten trug ich's
Am hübschen Haus.

"Und pflanzt' es wieder
Am stillen Ort ;
Nun zweigt es immer
Und blüht so fort."

Such is, in poetic transfiguration, the sum of the most enduring of all Goethe's amatory experiences. To the poet, back in his chilly northern Weimar after months in the Italian sun, Christiane had made an instant appeal ; she was a warm-blooded, Dionysiac little creature, whose passion, devoid of the old sentimental wrappings of the *Werther* time, fitted exactly into the mood of the *Römische Elegien*. But when the passion of the moment died down in Goethe, a very real affection for her took its place ; his letters to her are always full of affectionate tenderness, even if it is the condescending affection one shows to a child. And to Christiane's credit it must be said that she brought a new element into Goethe's relations with women ; she kindled in him a love for home. This was something new to Goethe—perhaps an indication of the maturing years ; he had never felt it for the home of his childhood, nor for Weimar in the earlier years. Thus was forged a new link, and a stronger link than either the duke or Charlotte von Stein had been able to provide, which held him prisoner in the little Saxon capital. As the years went on and the "forest flower" became an unprepossessing, stout little woman, with a marked propensity for good living and drinking and an inordinate love of dancing, she did become, in all the material aspects of life, a very real helpmate to Goethe ; she made his life easy and comfortable by administering humbly to his needs and comforts. And all this although Goethe did not remove the stigma upon her by making her his lawful wife, until the insecurity of life during the Napoleonic invasion and the insults of French soldiers forced the step upon him. Goethe's marriage offers baffling problems to the biographer. When one passes in review the many women that flitted through the poet's life, one must admit

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that, from Annette Schönpkopf to Ulrike von Levetzow, there was not one who was less worthy than Christiane Vulpius to fill the place of honour she filled ; no manner of apology—and Christiane has her apologists—can convince us that she was the right mate for the greatest mind of Europe. Remembering the peculiar aptness with which all Goethe's loves fitted into the mood and situation of the moment, might find an explanation and exoneration of his choice in the fact that he had turned his back on Weimar ; a breach had been opened by Italy between him and his old friends ; and by taking Christiane to fill that breach he gave expression, as it were, to the situation in which he found himself ; he set up a barrier between himself and the polite society of Weimar which was insurmountable. Christiane embodied Goethe's relations to Weimar now, as Charlotte von Stein had embodied them to the pre-Italian Weimar. But it is the permanence which Goethe gave to the union that puzzles us. It was, indeed, a marriage that carries us back to a primitive conception of women, when spiritual and intellectual community, even a very modest level of taste and culture—one stands aghast at the illiterateness of Christiane's letters—were of no account in marriage at all. If Christiane did not fail, it was due to the fact that the great man made, in this respect, no demands upon her, and to the humble self-effacement with which she fulfilled her lot. But the gods are not so easily appeased ; Nemesis is not to be circumvented. There *was* tragedy in this union which brought bitter misery upon the old poet's last years ; that tragedy was the son Christiane bore him on Christmas Day, 1789.

Charlotte von Stein did not learn of what had happened until months later, for during the summer she was mostly

absent from Weimar. When the affair ultimately did reach her ears, her indignation and recriminations were bitter. Goethe's reply to her reproaches in a letter of June 1st, 1789, is worth quoting, for it throws abundant light on his whole mood at this time :

“How much I love you, how well I know my duty towards you and your Fritz [her son in whose education Goethe had interested himself] I have proved by returning from Italy. If the duke had his will, I should still be there. Herder was going to Italy, and as I did not see how I could be of use to the hereditary prince, I had hardly anything to consider but you and Fritz. What I have left behind me in Italy I need not repeat : you have received my confidences on that score with sufficient unfriendliness. Unfortunately, when I came back, you were in a strange mood, and I confess frankly that the way in which you and others received me pained me very much. I saw Herder and the duchess depart ; I saw in the carriage an empty place which I was urged to take. I remained for the sake of my friends, as for their sakes I had returned ; and at that very moment I had to hear it persistently repeated that I might very well have stayed away altogether. And all this before there could be any question of a new relationship which appears to wound you so much. And what kind of relationship is it ? Who is made the poorer by it ? Who claims the hours that I spend with her ? Ask Fritz, ask the Herders, ask everyone who is intimate with me, whether I am the less willing to hear confidences, less willing to confide, less active on behalf of my friends than before. Whether, on the contrary, I do not now for the first time belong to them and to society in the right sense. And it would have been a miracle had I lost only the best and deepest relationship

of all—that to you. How vividly I felt it still existed when, on one occasion, I found you willing to talk with me on interesting subjects. But I confess frankly that the way in which you have hitherto treated me I cannot endure. Whenever I was disposed to talk, you closed my lips ; when I was communicative, you blamed me for my indifference ; when I was active for my friends, you accused me of coldness and neglect.”

And in a second letter of a week later he begs her to help him “ not to let the relationship which fills you with so much repugnance degenerate, but continue as it is.” Charlotte’s comment on the first of these letters was the “ O ! ” she wrote upon it. Such was Goethe’s final reckoning with the love of more than ten of his best years. The breach was complete ; not until long afterwards, when both Goethe and Charlotte von Stein were old and grey, did something of the old friendliness return again.

In the spring of 1790 the duchess Luise invited Goethe to join her in Italy ; and once more, in March of that year, he crossed the Alps, arriving in Venice on the last day of the month. He had, however, to wait many weeks here for the arrival of the duchess and in these weeks he seems to have grown very weary of the city. Two of his experiences in Venice stand out, however, with peculiar significance, if not for Goethe the poet, at least for the critic of art and the man of science. It will be remembered how indifferent he had been on his first visit to the artists who are the particular glory of Venice ; how with a kind of colour-blindness he had passed by the gorgeous canvasses of a Giorgione and a Paolo Veronese. Now, thanks, no doubt, to the influence of his Swiss friend, the artist Heinrich Meyer, he learned

to regard them with more seeing eyes. This new appreciation was a factor of significance for those studies on colour which he was now beginning, and which were to occupy him so intensively in the coming years. The other experience had bearing on his anatomical studies. A sheep's skull, accidentally picked up in the Jewish cemetery on the Lido, inspired him with a great new thought which furthered materially his evolutionary theory of organic development : as the plant structure is a development of the leaf, so the skull, it flashed upon him, is to be regarded as the development of a vertebra. And in Venice he wrote the Epigrams—some hundred in all—which are usually known as *Venetianische Epigramme*. It is instructive to read these side by side with the *Römische Elegien*, into which, hardly two years before, he had distilled the quintessence of his love for Italy. By so doing one gets the full brunt of the disillusionment which his second visit brought with it :

“Schön ist das Land ! doch ach ! Faustinen find’ ich nicht
wieder.

Das ist Italien nicht mehr, das ich mit Schmerzen
verliess.”

Frankly, there is something almost inexplicable in this sudden change of attitude. Surely the weeks of bored idleness in Venice could not have been responsible for it. Rather am I inclined to attribute it to the new life that had begun for him in Weimar ; the tugging at his heart-strings of wife and child :

“Südwärts liegen der Schätze wie viel ! Doch einer im
Norden

Zieht, ein grosser Magnet, unwiderstehlich zurück.”

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A warmth came into Goethe's whole attitude to Weimar, which had thus become invested with a quality it had never possessed before for him ; for the first time it stood to him for home. And of his duke, without whom this happiness would not have been possible, he could only think with gratitude :

“ Klein ist unter den Fürsten Germaniens freilich der meine ;

Kurz und schmal ist sein Land, mässig nur, was er vermag.

Aber so wende nach innen, so wende nach aussen die Kräfte

Jeder ; da wär's ein Fest, Deutscher mit Deutschen zu sein.

Doch was priesest du Ihn, den Taten und Werke verkünden ?

Und bestochen erschien' deine Verehrung vielleicht ;
Denn mir hat er gegeben, was Grosse selten gewähren,
Neigung, Musse, Vertraun, Felder und Garten und Haus.

Niemand braucht' ich zu danken als Ihm, und manches bedurft' ich,

Der ich mich auf den Erwerb schlecht, als ein Dichter, verstand,

Hat mich Europa gelobt, was hat mir Europa gegeben ?
Nichts ! Ich habe, wie schwer ! meine Gedichte bezahlt.

Deutschland ahmte mich nach, und Frankreich mochte mich lesen.

England ! freundlich empfindest du den zerrütteten Gast.

Doch was fördert es mich, dass auch sogar der Chinese

AGAIN IN WEIMAR

Mahlet, mit ängstlicher Hand, Werthern und Lotten
auf Glas?

Niemals frug ein Kaiser nach mir, es hat sich kein
König

Um mich bekümmert, und Er war mir August und
Mäcen."

But, rightly read, there is more in these lines—as in the *Venetianische Epigramme* as a whole—than a reviving love for the Weimar that had so often hemmed his flight. There is a note of resignation and self-imposed limitation. The Titan in Goethe is dead.

After a visit to Padua, Vicenza, Verona and Mantua, the party reached home again on June 20th. This time Goethe returned to Weimar a more contented man than ever before; and a comparatively happy period of his life set in. Meanwhile the out-of-jointness of the great world outside was becoming increasingly apparent; all Europe was breathlessly watching the course of the French Revolution, as it plunged deeper and deeper into anarchy and bloodshed. Goethe's attitude to its terrible events was characterised by a balanced insight, and even foresight, which none of his contemporaries in the literary world shared. To say that he regarded the Revolution from his aristocratic standpoint as merely an unmitigated evil would be far from the truth. As he had not, in the beginning, shared the exultation of all who were then young in the new gospel of the "Rights of Man," so he showed no violent revulsion of feeling when the Revolution degenerated into orgies of crime. For Goethe it was one of those great world happenings—as Napoleon a little later—which are foreordained and inevitable, and which have to be regarded without indigna-

tion and borne with seemly fortitude. His own firm stand-by in the welter of political confusion was the political ideals of the ancien régime as he had helped to perfect them in Karl August's little kingdom ; he had always advocated a wise anticipation of the terrible lessons the Revolution was to teach, by lightening the burdens and sweetening the lives of the governed. But for the "subject" he had nothing but the undemocratic and quietest doctrine of abject submission to authority, of unconcern in the affairs of government. It was enough for him that each man should "sweep before his own door."

The Revolution colours all Goethe's thought in these years ; and it leaves its imprint on his writings from the *Venice Epigrams* of 1790 to *Die natürliche Tochter* of 1804. It is a tribute to the staidness of Goethe's outlook on world affairs that his standpoint and attitude, as they are to be seen in the last of these works, do not differ materially from those in the first. The precipitate of the Revolution in Goethe's literary work is admittedly a poor one ; but that is not to be attributed to its lack of inspiring materials, but to the strange atrophy of Goethe's own poetic genius in these years. He himself once expressed his disappointment that his dramas inspired by the Revolution, *Der Bürgergeneral*, the uncompleted *Die Aufgeregten*, *Der Grosskophta*, with Cagliostro and the famous Diamond Necklace as its theme, should have been so summarily classed with his vaudevilles as works of very minor significance ; but I doubt if it is possible to offer a very serious apologia for them now. The language they speak is in more than the literal sense the language of prose ; the thoughts that inspire them are, when they are not merely trivial, political rather than poetic thoughts ; and the men and women that people them live

only the artificial stage life of the comedy of Iffland and Kotzebue. For the real poetic harvest of the Revolution in Goethe's work we have to look to a poem of a later date : *Hermann und Dorothea*.

The Revolution gave the duke of Weimar the opportunity he so ardently sought of indulging his martial ambitions. He placed himself and his little army at the disposal of Prussia, which was then preparing to defend German hearths and homes against the pestilence from the west. The duke was appointed a general in the Prussian army ; and in this capacity he spent some weeks in the autumn of 1790 with the camp at Breslau, taking Goethe with him. On the way Goethe had the opportunity of seeing Dresden again, which he had not visited for over twenty years. And in 1792 Goethe had an actual taste of war. He accompanied the ill-starred campaign into France by which the German allies hoped to dam the wave of revolution. Goethe went with considerable reluctance, for he was at the time deep in his new optical studies ; in Breslau the thought had flashed on him which was to provide the abiding stimulus of all these studies, namely, that the Newtonian theory of the nature of light was wrong. It is, indeed, a curious illustration of Goethe's powers of mental detachment that in the midst of all the stirring happenings in the field these optical interests were always uppermost. On his way to join the army he spent a few weeks in Frankfort, where, after an interval of twelve years, he again saw his mother. Frau Rat had been extraordinarily staunch and sympathetic in her attitude to her son's unsanctified union with Christiane ; after all, a grandson was a grandson, even if she did regret that it could not " be put in the papers and properly celebrated." At the end of August Goethe

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joined the Prussian camp at Longwy. Verdun fell on September 2nd. So far the issue was hopeful for the German allies ; but unfortunately they did not—and owing to incessant rain, partly could not—take advantage of their initial success ; they proceeded down the valley of the Aisne too leisurely and the revolutionary forces had time to retrieve their strength. On September 20th took place the “cannonade” of Valmy which ended in the retreat of the invading Germans and the virtual end of the disastrous campaign. During the battle Goethe rode out into the firing line, curious to experience the effect on him of cannon shot ; and in the evening he made the oracular, if somewhat cryptic remark : “ From this place and day begins a new epoch in history, and you may say that you have been present.” Did he mean more than that the campaign was hopeless, and that the Revolution must triumph ? Or was there perhaps a dim hint in his words of the coming of a democracy, when a nation’s fate would lie in its own hands and not in those of a professional soldiery ? Or did he merely over-estimate the significance of an engagement that left no particular mark on the history of Europe ? The night after the battle Goethe and the duke slept in their cloaks in the trenches. Little over a week later the German army was in full retreat, a wet, cold retreat full of privations, sickness and discontent. Goethe reached Trier on October 20th, and then went down the Moselle by boat to Coblenz. Once here, he took the opportunity of paying a visit to Düsseldorf, and in the beginning of December he spent some days with the Princess Amalie von Gallitzin in Münster. After all the adventures and discomforts of the campaign it was a very real pleasure to be welcomed home at midnight on December 17th by the mistress of

his house on the Frauenplan, which, in his absence, had been undergoing considerable alterations.

The story of this chapter in Goethe's life he has himself written for us in that vivid description of the military adventure which, however, was not published until thirty years later, *Die Campagne in Frankreich*. In the following year, 1793, he was present with the duke at the siege of Mainz, a kind of aftermath of his martial experiences in France. This, however, was a very tedious operation and not successfully terminated until July. The little state of Weimar had paid dearly for its espousal of the Prussian policy and the military ambitions of its duke; and it was a great satisfaction to Goethe that, when the latter ultimately returned, disappointed and embittered, he was firmly resolved to have nothing more to do with armies and war. He resigned his generalship in the Prussian army.

These were barren years in Goethe's poetic life; the great stimulus of Italy had been, as we have seen, sufficiently powerful to carry *Torquato Tasso* and the *Römische Elegien* to a successful conclusion; but it failed conspicuously when it was a question of completing *Faust*; of new creations there is virtually nothing to record at all. He turned—as he always did when poetry lost savour with him—to an objective, impersonal task, which had in it a certain element of the mechanical; he made an admirable modernisation of the old Low German beast epic of *Reineke Fuchs*, attuning it to the political temper of his own age. This was published in 1794. In 1791, the year in which he undertook the direction of the ducal theatre, he began the revision and completion of his own novel of the theatre, *Wilhelm Meister*. It did not, however, make much progress until 1794.

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There is, it seems to me, no clearer proof of the unwillingness of Minerva in these years than is to be found in Goethe's conversion of *Wilhelm Meisters Theatralische Sendung* into *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. In spite of a too obvious—and for the modern reader sometimes tedious—insistence on its purpose, the education of a young man with a passion for the theatre from a dilettante in its art to a master, the first novel gave, as we have seen, vivid and plastic pictures of the Germany of its day ; it contained a varied gallery of interesting and living figures. The reader, comparing *Wilhelm Meister* in either of its forms with the great European fiction of the eighteenth century outside Germany, is disappointed by the monotonous provincial level of its world ; but this fault is not altogether to be laid at Goethe's door. Once, praising Sir Walter Scott to Eckermann in later years, Goethe regretfully reflected on what his own novel might have been, had he had the materials with which Scottish life and history so bountifully provided Scott. The task of completing *Wilhelm Meister* which lay before Goethe now was certainly a formidable one. The manuscript had to be revised and condensed ; and this Goethe did with skill and judgment. Tedious pages were excised ; poetic possibilities occasionally developed ; and the characters of the story, mostly to their advantage, polished and refined. The balance is better held between the world of the theatre and the everyday world outside it ; and the ground for Schiller's justified reproach that it was rather a book for actors than one about them has been removed. So far so good, but the real difficulty began with the continuation of the novel. Its original goal, the hero's successful creation of a national theatre, had entirely lost its interest for Goethe ; and that in spite of

the fact that the opportunity of realising such an end had been placed in his own hands. The art of the theatre was no longer, in his eyes, a sufficient end in itself. The new wine of the poet's Italian experiences had to be poured into the old bottle; and the completion of *Wilhelm Meister* owes quite as much to Italy as *Torquato Tasso*, if on the ethic rather than the aesthetic side. Wilhelm's aspiration to be an actor and the director of a national theatre had to be transformed into a symbolical apprenticeship to a more comprehensive art, the art of living; the Saul who had gone out to find his father's asses, had to find a kingdom. The joining on of so unanticipated a sequel was bound to result in serious dislocations, which are disturbing enough. Still more difficult was it to adapt the older parts of the novel so that they might foreshadow the coming change, and prepare the reader for the ultimate disillusionment of the hero. Here, it must be admitted, Goethe is only very partially successful.

The *Theatralische Sendung* had left Meister within sight of his goal; for the successful performance of *Hamlet*, now in the fifth book, must have been an integral part of the original novel. In resuming his work on the book, Goethe had thus to lose no time in initiating the change; we see it at once in the letters between Wilhelm and his friend Werner, with which the fifth book opens. "In a word," says Wilhelm here, "the cultivation of my individual self—here, as I am—has, from my youth upwards, been constantly, though dimly, my wish and purpose. . . . This harmonious cultivation of my nature which was denied me by birth, is exactly what I most long for." This is not the old Wilhelm, although he still cherishes the hope that he may realise his new aim by means of the stage. The development of the hero's per-

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sonality, not the creation of a national theatre, is thus now the central theme of the novel ; art is no longer the end, but merely the stepping-stone to the higher life—a doctrine which Schiller had so eloquently and persuasively preached in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. The performance of *Hamlet*, originally a culmination in Wilhelm's apprenticeship to the theatre, now becomes a turning-point in his life. The insufficiency of the artistic life is proclaimed in the mysterious warning of Wilhelm's guardian spirit : "For the first and last time : Flee, youth, flee !" With the death of the actress who had impersonated Ophelia, Aurelia, in whom Goethe personifies the art of the theatre in its purest and most disinterested form, the final passing of that art is symbolised. Before her death Aurelia had entrusted Wilhelm with a manuscript, *The Confessions of a Beautiful Soul*, which forms the sixth book of the novel. These *Confessions*, for which Goethe utilised records and memories of the friend of his youth, Susanna von Klettenberg, are usually regarded, even by indulgent critics, as a stop-gap, a device to obliterate, or at least make less noticeable, the gulf between the old novel and the new. But the *Confessions of a Beautiful Soul* also provide a kind of bridge from the old to the new group of characters, without whom the story could not have been carried to a close ; here, too, is intoned that pietism which was the ultimate foundation of all Goethe's life-philosophy. Within the entirely inadequate limits of the last two books Goethe completes his hero's apprenticeship to life in a circle of noble men and women who stand for the highest ideals of Goethe's age ; Wilhelm passes—as Goethe had planned as far back as 1778—from the undisciplined enthusiasms of his youth into a life of wise and measured

activity. But how much wider was the development that opened up to his hero now, than what Goethe had planned for him in his pre-Italian days ! Through an aesthetically cultured humanity, personified in the Uncle and the "company of the tower" he rises to that ethical and humane ideal of culture which receives its consecration in the person of Natalie, a figure somewhat inconsequently developed out of the "fair Amazon" of the earlier plan. Wilhelm learns the great lesson of the "holy earnestness" of life ; and the wisdom of that self-limitation based on renunciation which Goethe never ceased to preach. "Here or nowhere is thy America !" This was Goethe's own spiritual evolution, the evolution of his Faust ; and in a wider sense the evolution of the German mind in the classic age. A more grandiose theme no novel ever had than this : a spiritual voyaging to the safe haven of noble self-realisation.

But, alas ! how very far Goethe's imaginative genius—its wings clipped and its power crippled in these years of distracting interests and disillusionment—fell short of realising his magnificent plan ! His failure to provide *Wilhelm Meister* with a worthy conclusion is one of the most regrettable things in Goethe's poetic life. A paralysing schematism spreads over these last books of the novel ; and Wilhelm, on whose shoulders the burden of theories had been weighing ever heavier, until all his original Werther-like freshness had been crushed out of him, becomes now, to use Carlyle's phrase in a moment of impatience, a mere "nose of wax," a mannequin on which his creator's educational life-theories are draped. And these theories are set forth by figures who are themselves only artificial automata, lacking in real flesh and blood ; moving through a world as unreal as themselves. Even

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when the scene passes for a time to Italy, it is anything but the Italy of beauty and romance of which Mignon had once dreamed. One is tempted to say that the art of the theatre, which *Wilhelm Meister* had been originally planned to exalt, took a cruel revenge upon her faithless devotee, and triumphed in the end. For what are all the settings and paraphernalia of these last books—the mysterious tower, the free-masonic mummary, the operatic ceremonies—but things of the theatre : artificially lit scenes, properties of lath and plaster, mere stagecraft ? Of poetic life and reality, either in the people or the world they move in, there is none. Critics have liked to dwell on the value of Schiller's councils for the completion of the novel ; and the correspondence of the two poets shows how disinterestedly Schiller immersed himself in the book as it came from Goethe's pen. But I would rather see in Schiller's assistance one of the disadvantages under which Goethe laboured ; for he was thereby encouraged in his fateful quest of " ideas," and in his corresponding neglect of the plastically real. There was a kind of metaphysical incitement in Schiller's criticism, which had a paralysing effect on Goethe's creative genius ; it helped to complete his descent from the " naive " to the " sentimental." If Goethe had had at his elbow a friend who could have said to him : " Be the great artist you were born to be ; for art is holier than all theory ! These Lotharios, Uncles, Abbés ; these Aurelias, Thereses, Natalies are the veriest shadows of living men and women. Forget what they stand for in your theory of life and give them instead the breath of life. Go back to your Werther, your Götz, your Gretchen and Mephistopheles ; try to catch again the Shakespearean power you then commanded. Make your people live, even as the first Wilhelm lived

and Mignon, and Friedrich and the fascinating Philine ! ” —had Goethe had at his elbow a friend who could have given him such advice, it would have outweighed all Schiller’s abstractions.

Is it too much to read out of the disappointing falling-off in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* the conclusion that as Goethe grew in wisdom—and a wiser outlook upon life no man ever had than Goethe from his return from Italy until the end—it was paid for at the cost of his productive genius as a poet ? That seems to me to be the lesson of these years, nay, the key to the understanding of the whole post-Italian Goethe : he who believed that he had “ found himself ” in Italy as an artist, had in reality lost there his artist’s soul.

Chapter Eight

GOETHE AND SCHILLER

The friendship of Goethe and Schiller—one of the dreams of literary history come true—is the visible symbol of the culmination of that classical literature which they had the main share in creating. There is no chapter of German literature on which one dwells with more satisfaction than this which describes the brotherhood of genius ; the more so as it was not one of those happenings which are to be taken as a matter of course. For Goethe and Schiller were too different in temperament and mentality to be suited to become friends ; and had the approach been initiated by Goethe, we might be tempted to see in it the working of that instinct which always led him to select antipathetic people as his associates—men like Behrisch, Merck and Herder in his earlier life. But the choosing was rather on the part of Schiller. As a schoolboy in Stuttgart, he had, it will be remembered, first set eyes on Goethe, on the occasion of the visit paid by Goethe and his duke to the Military Academy ; and ever since then he had looked up to him as one to whom had fallen the good fortune which had been cruelly denied to himself. The elder poet—and Goethe was ten years Schiller's senior—had, he enviously felt, never known the adverse fortune which had been his own lot. Moreover, Schiller was under an immediate obligation to Goethe ; he owed to the latter's recommendation his professorship in Jena.

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It may have been that Goethe, when he made that recommendation, was not entirely disinterested ; his motive having been partly to keep Schiller, the inconvenient rebel of *Die Räuber*, at some distance from Weimar ; but to Schiller the appointment was a great boon in dark and uncertain days, and he was grateful. Still, it was not without much reluctance that he took the step of approaching Goethe. We see this from his letters to his most intimate friend, Körner. " His world is not mine, our ideas are essentially at variance. . . . To be often with Goethe would make me unhappy ; even towards his nearest friends he has no moments of effusion ; one cannot, as it were, get hold of him. I believe, in fact, that he is an egotist in an extraordinary degree. It is a very strange mixture of hatred and love that he has awakened in me." And then, more honestly : " This man, this Goethe, is, once for all, in my way, and he reminds me too often that fate has treated me harshly. How lightly his genius is borne aloft by his destiny, and what battles I still have to fight, down to this very moment ! "

The first letter which Schiller addressed to Goethe was a formal and tentative note of June 18th, 1794, inviting him to collaborate in a new periodical, *Die Horen*, which Schiller was preparing to launch. Goethe replied politely, and a meeting between the two men took place not long afterwards, at which both frankly recognised and admitted their essentially opposite ways of looking at life and nature. Then came, at the end of August, that extraordinarily penetrating letter of Schiller's in which he summed up the antithesis between them, a summing-up which, one might well say, contains the substance of Schiller's important treatise on naive and sentimental poetry, published in the following year. This letter was the

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beginning of the enduring friendship which was only cut short by the younger poet's death in 1805. Schiller saw in himself the philosophic, reflective poet who proceeds from the abstract to the concrete, sets out from the "idea," and seeks to impose that idea upon phenomena; while Goethe is the realist, who takes his stand on nature and the world revealed by the senses, allowing this world to interpret itself, as it were, untrammelled by abstract preconceptions of what it ought to mean. Nothing more illuminating has ever been written on Goethe's intellectual temperament, although by the time the friendship with Schiller was sealed, Goethe had, as I have already indicated, become in large measure faithless to the "naïveté" of his earlier writings on which Schiller had based his conception of him.

"You take," Schiller wrote to him, "all nature collectively, in order to obtain light on its details; in the universality of her phenomena you seek the explanation of the individual. From the simple organism you rise, step by step, to the more complicated, in order to reconstruct genetically from the whole edifice of nature, the most complicated phenomenon of all, man. By, as it were, creating as nature herself creates, you seek to penetrate into her most secret technique. A great and truly heroic idea, which sufficiently proves how your mind combines the rich whole of its ideas to a beautiful unity. . . . Had you been born a Greek, or only an Italian, and had from your cradle onwards, a choice nature and an idealising art around you, your way would have been infinitely shortened, perhaps it would have been quite superfluous. . . . But as you have been born a German, as your Greek spirit has been set in this northern world, you have no other choice than either to become yourself a northern

artist, or with the aid of your intellect, to supplement your imagination by giving it that reality which has been denied you, thus, as it were from within, and by the instrumentality of reason, bringing to birth a new Greece."

There was greater reluctance on Goethe's part to enter into the new friendship. He was in no mood to make new friends of any kind at this time, let alone such a friend as he believed Schiller to be. The post-Italian Goethe with his "Storm and Stress" far behind him, and his mind attuned to classic harmonies, could not but profoundly distrust this younger poet, whose early dramas, not excepting *Don Carlos*, seemed to him reprehensible aberrations from good taste. But the first meeting between the two men in Jena, and the letter which has just been quoted, removed the more serious obstacles. Both poets allowed themselves to be convinced that, despite all intellectual disparity and antagonism, they were at bottom seeking the same goal, approaching it from different sides.

The history of the friendship between Goethe and Schiller is contained in the thousand letters which the two poets interchanged between 1794 and 1895. It is the most "literary" of all the collections of Goethe's correspondence; but it is almost exclusively "literary." On the human side, the letters are disappointing; they throw strangely little light on the more intimate personality and life of either poet these ten years. One obvious reason was that Christiane had raised a barrier—Schiller's wife in particular would not countenance her—which restricted the intercourse of the two poets to their professional interests as men of letters. Besides this barrier, which Goethe tacitly, and probably not unwillingly, recognised, there was a distinct reluctance on

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his part to be over-communicative, even where his work was concerned. I doubt, indeed, whether he ever overcame his original distrust of Schiller ; ever accepted him quite unreservedly as his brother-in-arms. The latter's frankness contrasts pleasantly with Goethe's "buttoned-up" attitude and somewhat condescending tone. Goethe has, as Schiller anticipated before he knew him, no moments of effusion. He who had been so ready in early years to wear his heart on his sleeve, and who could still write openly about himself, his work and his plans, to correspondents of much smaller calibre than Schiller, maintains, for the most part, a reserve that must have been chilling. There was, in other words, good friendship between the two men, but no deeper personal intimacy ; they never got beyond the formal "Sie" in their mutual address.

In replying to Schiller's invitation to contribute to the *Horen*, Goethe had expressed his regret that he had already made arrangements for the publication of *Wilhelm Meister* ; otherwise, that novel might have been published serially in the new journal. No doubt, this and *Faust* were what Schiller hoped to induce Goethe to give him. It was a pity for Schiller's sake that they were not available ; for *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* would certainly have staved off the lamentable failure of *Die Horen*. As it was, that failure, I fear, has in great measure to be laid at Goethe's door. What he actually did contribute, the *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*—surely the most uninspired of all Goethe's experiments in prose fiction—and the translation of Benvenuto Cellini's life, not only fell very far short of what Schiller might have reasonably expected from the greatest of his contemporaries, but they must also have been very uninviting to the public

to whom *Die Horen* appealed. Even the *Römische Elegien*, the only contribution worthy of him, may have been, owing to their unveiled tone, a somewhat dubious asset to a journal which catered for the general cultured public.

Although Schiller was debarred from publishing *Wilhelm Meister*, he took the greatest interest in it ; he read it partly in proof and partly in manuscript ; and his criticism, although, as I have indicated, it may have tempted Goethe into paths which he would have been wiser not to follow, shows a discriminating appreciation of the spiritual meaning of the book. Indeed, through all these years Schiller's interest in Goethe's poetic work continued unabated, in spite of the *noli me tangere* spirit with which his criticism and advice were often accepted. This forms the most valuable part of the correspondence ; and it will always redound to the younger poet's credit that his pleading induced Goethe to take out again the old yellowed manuscript of his *Faust* and resume work upon it.

Active collaboration between Goethe and Schiller began with the collection of epigrammatic distichs on the model of Martial, the *Xenien*, which were published in 1797, not, however, in the *Horen*, but in another periodical venture of Schiller's, a *Musen Almanach*. The motive which prompted the *Xenien* was, in the first instance, the discouraging reception of *Die Horen* ; but in a larger sense they voiced the resentment both poets felt at seeing the leadership in the literary world pass to the hands of the younger generation ; what hurt them was not so much that they had been attacked by that generation, as that they were being ignored. Satire does not seem the most helpful way of redressing such a balance, especially as it must have been patent to the two poets that they had only

themselves to blame if they were being thus tacitly relegated to the shelf. Since *Don Carlos*, ten years before, Schiller had abandoned the drama, and we have only to put ourselves at the standpoint of 1796 to admit that contemporaries had every reason to think that his day was over ; and in Goethe's case the public had equally good reason to believe that he had abdicated. The attack of the *Xenien* went forth, and seems—although it is a little puzzling for a modern reader to explain why—to have been effective. Schiller, no doubt, contributed most to this end, for his distichs have more sting in them than Goethe's. The latter also replied to belittlers in an essay entitled *Literarischer Sansculottismus*, which was published in *Die Horen* itself.

It is doubtful, however, whether the *Xenien* would have done more than raise a temporary dust, had not the two friends, satisfied that they had somehow rehabilitated themselves by their onslaught, settled down to serious work : the “*Xenien-war*” was the prelude to Schiller's *Wallenstein* and Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*. This was, after all, the only real way of putting themselves right with the public. Before, however, these works matured, the beneficial effects of the new friendship showed themselves in the series of ballads which the two friends composed in friendly rivalry in 1797. Here, again, was the front of the medal, of which the *Xenien* had been but the reverse. Schiller's ballads with their picturesque dramatic settings and broad, simple moral, belong to the most cherished possessions of the German people ; Goethe's of this period—*Der Zauberlehrling*, *Der neue Pausias*, *Der Schatzgräber*, above all, *Die Braut von Korinth* and *Der Gott und die Bajadere*—may not be able to vie with them in their widespread popularity ; the peculiar mental

exclusiveness of the post-Italian Goethe stands in the way ; but they take very high rank among Goethe's shorter poems ; represent, indeed, a kind of high-water mark of the German classical ballad. But just this adjective "classical" reveals the wide gulf that lay between the Goethe of *Der Erlkönig* and *Der König in Thule*—which breathed the very spirit of Percy and Bürger—and the Goethe of 1797 ; once again, in fact, it is the antithesis of the "naive" and the "sentimental" of Schiller's classification. The ballad as Goethe now cultivated it, is not, in respect of its aesthetic presuppositions, so very different from that in which Schiller excelled.

Having thus, with Schiller's help, rediscovered his poetic genius, Goethe gradually found his way back to that "cloudy and misty way" that led to *Faust*. It was about this time that the new idea seized hold of him by virtue of which the purely personal tragedy of the sixteenth-century poet was to be converted into a world-poem of universal application, and his life and activity linked up with the divine governance of the world. To *Faust*, in other words, Goethe applied the same kind of generalising symbolism which had converted *Wilhelm Meister* from a novel about the theatre to a novel about life ; but the symbolisation of *Faust* opened up more grandiose vistas than that of the novel, and Goethe's genius was more equal to the task. Moreover, it was a question of poetry, not prose ; and verse always lent wings to Goethe's imagination, as surely as prose, in these later years, dragged him down ; there was more than technical theory behind his emphatic word to Schiller that all great imaginative conceptions should be treated rhythmically. In 1798 was written the overture to the new *Faust*, that wonderful "Dedication," which marks the awakening

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of the poem from its long sleep of more than twenty years ; and about the same time the two prologues were conceived, which changed its whole outlook. But of this new *Faust* I speak in my next chapter.

Although the letters to Schiller throw disappointingly little light on the growth of *Hermann und Dorothea*, there is much to learn from them concerning the spirit in which that poem was planned and written. We see how completely Goethe had been won over to Schiller's idealistic approach to the problems of literary creation ; and a tiny essay on epic and dramatic poetry, embedded in the correspondence, to which both poets attached their names, is equally applicable to Schiller's dramatic art and the art of *Hermann und Dorothea*. Schiller completed the process in Goethe's mind which Italy with her revelation of ancient beauty had initiated : his conversion to an idealising classicism ; and once this classical "idea" had taken root in him, it grew, as it grows in all minds that yield to its spell. The subjective realism of *Götz* and *Werther* had been long repudiated by Goethe as a thing of evil, a "Gothic" crime against the majesty of art, and now even the tempered and still subjective classicism of *Iphigenie* and *Tasso* had become a turned page in his life-book. The "great confession" of poetry, once in Goethe's mind the supreme end and essence of his own work, was now ruthlessly eliminated from it ; experiences and emotions had to be sifted and sublimated before they were acceptable as even the raw materials of poetry ; it was no longer, in our poet's eyes, legitimate "art" at all, to put living, breathing human beings into a poem—as Shakespeare had done—unscrutinised for their general and universal aspects. Thus the classic veil was descending on this great northern mind ; generalising, typifying, ordering, were now the

serious business of his genius ; not, alas, imagining and creating.

All this, for good as well as for evil, has left its mark on *Hermann und Dorothea*. For good, in so far as Goethe has abandoned the unregulated and disturbing formlessness of his early work ; *Hermann und Dorothea* is a " regular " poem, an epic idyll of surpassing formal beauty. Its balance and proportions are irreproachable, its contents are divided over nine cantos, each dedicated to one of the Muses, without, it is true, much relevance to the matter of the section over which each particular Muse is chosen to preside ; and it is written in Greek hexameters magically adapted to the music of the German tongue. Such perfect beauty is in itself a virtue of the highest order. But it is not easy to accept with equanimity Goethe's commitment to the classic dogma, when one remembers that he had already given the world masterpieces of transcendent genius which were innocent of " classicism " in any form. *Hermann und Dorothea* is essentially a classic poem. Its hero, Hermann, is conceived on classic lines ; that is to say, he is not a particular German youth, but a generalised type of German youth ; Dorothea is a typical German maiden ; and the host of the Golden Lion and his wife are equally representatives of their class. These figures have, so to speak, been rolled like pebbles in a brook, until all their sharp corners are rubbed off, or they are, if one may be anachronistic, the product of composite photography. This process completed, the essence of the type distilled, Goethe—having enough of his old sense of reality left to appreciate the dangers of schematism—proceeds to superimpose upon them a new realism ; he takes his generalised portraits and touches in, with the deft brush of the perfect artist, individualising traits.

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This art is particularly noticeable in the subtlest figure of the poem, the Apothecary ; and it tempts us to seek a model for Hermann's mother in Goethe's own, and even something of Lili Schöнемann in Dorothea. It may well be that specific subjective traits are not absent ; but the process by which the resemblance between the portrait and the model is achieved is a very different one from that whereby Lotte Buff passed into immortality in *Werthers Leiden*. The great living figures in the creations of Goethe's youth, Götz and Weislingen, Clavigo and Don Carlos, Faust and Mephistopheles, knew nothing of the currycomb of aesthetic theory. Similarly, the background of the poem has been invested with a semblance of particular realism which has entrapped commentators into fruitless controversies concerning the actual village of the Rhineland in which Goethe laid his scene, whereas it is merely a classically constructed, typical village made up of innumerable memories.

The outline of Goethe's story came from a chronicle which described how, some seventy years before, Protestants had been harshly exiled from Salzburg by an intolerant archbishop ; the poet transferred an anecdote there related to his own time, and framed it in the great Revolution. The Revolution, and the Revolution alone, dates *Hermann und Dorothea* ; its ominous rumblings form its dark background, as the 'Thirty Years' War was the "finstre Zeitgrund" of the great tragedy which Schiller was engaged on at the same time. The lines which Goethe dedicates to the Revolution contain the quintessence of what he thought about it, and his idyllic village is as a haven of refuge amidst the upset and turmoil of Europe at the century's end. In his sixth canto Goethe crystallises and sanctifies with a halo of poetry all that he

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had ever thought about the Revolution. The words are put upon the Apothecary's lips :

“ Nicht kurz sind unsere Leiden ;
Denn wir haben das Bittere der sämtlichen Jahre getrunken,
Schrecklicher, weil auch uns die schönste Hoffnung
zerstört ward.

Denn wer leugnet es wohl, dass hoch sich das Herz ihm
erhoben,

Ihm die freiere Brust mit reineren Pulsen geschlagen,
Als sich der erste Glanz der neuen Sonne heran hob,
Als man hörte vom Rechte der Menschen, das allen gemein
sei,

Von der begeisternden Freiheit und von der löblichen
Gleichheit !

Damals hoffte jeder sich selbst zu leben ; es schien sich
Aufzulösen das Band, das viele Länder umstrickte,
Als der Müssiggang und der Eigennutz in der Hand hielt.
Schauten nicht alle Völker in jenen drängenden Tagen
Nach der Hauptstadt der Welt, die es schon solange gewesen,
Und jetzt mehr als je den herrlichen Namen verdiente ?
Waren nicht jener Männer, der ersten Verkünder der
Botschaft,

Namen den höchsten gleich, die unter die Sterne gesetzt
sind ?

Wuchs nicht jeglichem Menschen der Mut und der Geist
und die Sprache ? ”

And after describing the avenging wrath of the German
people, he points the moral :

“ Möcht' ich den Menschen doch nie in dieser schnöden
Verirrung

Wiedersehen ! Das wütende Tier ist ein besserer
Anblick.

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Sprech' er doch nie von Freiheit, als könn' er sich selber regieren !

Losgebunden erscheint, sobald die Schranken hinweg sind,

Alles Böse, das tief das Gesetz in die Winkel zurücktrieb."

And yet one feels as if the French Revolution had not its place here by any natural right ; it is something of an obtrusion on a poem and theme which are classically timeless ; it is not vital to *Hermann und Dorothea*, and its removal would make no essential difference. Again, this was not the method Goethe employed in *Götz* or *Werther*, or even *Tasso*, where the theme grew out of and was dependent upon its milieu ; here the milieu is superimposed.

George Henry Lewes, it will be remembered, claimed *Hermann und Dorothea* as Goethe's most perfect creation ; and indeed, throughout the nineteenth century there was a general consensus of opinion to this effect. If we are less willing nowadays to concede to it this exceptional position, it is not because we are less sensitive to its wonderful harmonious beauty, but because we feel an element of "calculation" in its perfection ; it is no living experience as *Werther* and the first *Faust* had been, transferred to paper under the compelling power of genius. When—to use again the terms of Schiller's aesthetics—the great "naive" poets of the world thus become "sentimental," they lose something of their power. Of no man of genius is this truer than of Goethe ; for him the experience, and the experience alone, provided the life-blood of his creative work.

Hermann und Dorothea brought Goethe popular success,

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such as he had not known since *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Werther* ; it rehabilitated him in the eyes of his own people, and to this rehabilitation the publication of First Part of *Faust*, some nine years later, put the crown. But I am not sure whether Goethe realised, or, if he did realise it, cared wherein the success of his epic consisted. He did not see that the classical form had contributed little ; in fact, the reading public stumbled over his hexameters, and would have taken the poem more readily to their hearts, had it been couched in a simpler, less exotic rhythm ; possibly, too, remembering the unvarnished realism of Goethe's model, Voss's *Luise*, they may have resented the Homeric turns and the didactic wisdom, the classically polished talk put upon the lips of simple folk. They felt instinctively the fallacy of Goethe's view that there was anything Homeric, or suitable to be treated in the grand Homeric manner, in his sentimental story. But in spite of these disadvantages, *Hermann und Dorothea* did hold a beautifying mirror up to the life of its time ; contemporaries recognised its types as their own ; and above all, they delighted in its idyllic love-story that ended harmoniously with marriage bells. Goethe, misjudging their applause, accepted it as an encouragement, not to write another *Hermann und Dorothea*, but to proceed further on his Homeric way ; to justify the thought that Schiller had instilled into him that he was a Greek born out of his time. In his *Achilleis*, which remained a fragment, he grappled with Homer on his own ground ; and he carried his new generalising art to its logical conclusion in *Die natürliche Tochter* on the one hand, and to *Pandora* and *Helena* on the other. Thus with *Hermann und Dorothea* opened the last phase of Goethe's classicism, which was only to find its close with *Faust* kneeling at the feet of the

Virgin ; neither the magic of the East nor the mysticism of Romanticism—the most potent forces in his late years—was able to shake his allegiance.

Of the works that have just been mentioned, only *Die natürliche Tochter* was completed during Schiller's lifetime. It was published in 1804. Here, too, as in *Hermann und Dorothea*, the French Revolution is the background ; indeed, it is expressly a drama of the Revolution, being the first of what was planned as a trilogy embodying the spirit of that age. In this respect it surely falls very far short of success. One may discover beneath its surface, abstractly, dissociated from realities, the widening social breach that engendered the Revolution ; but of what the Revolution actually stood for in European history there is less here than in the trivial dramas which have already been mentioned. The drama has been called "marble cold" ; but it is less cold than colourless—colourless and timeless ; for it might well play outside any definite epoch at all. This impression gathers force from a feature—needless to say, the only one—which it has in common with the expressionistic drama of our own time : with the exception of the heroine Eugenie, the characters are without names. It may have satisfied Goethe's classical ambition to produce types rather than individuals ; but it also obliterated the nexus with historical reality ; and even the most inveterate hunter for empiric bases in Goethe's poetry would hardly venture to suggest a living model for Eugenie. *Die natürliche Tochter* is thus in Goethe's work the best illustration of whither his preoccupation with literary theories was leading him ; it was surely the least successful of all the attempts of this age of classic aspiration, to impose upon the northern mind an alien art-form.

Meanwhile, in these ten years of his friendship with Schiller Goethe's interests were directed rather to art and science than to poetry. "My life," he wrote in 1800, "is swept along, to all appearance with ever greater vehemence. The many threads I took up in earlier years—in the sciences, the arts, public affairs—run ever closer together. Poetry is again in danger of being neglected in favour of philosophy, physical science and their like." One wonders, indeed, how in a life so pre-occupied with unpoetic things, Goethe could have found time for a *Hermann und Dorothea* at all. We hear, however, little of these many interests in his correspondence with Schiller. Undismayed by the disappointment of 1790, he again contemplated a journey to Italy; and again the magnet was Italian art. Together with his friend, Heinrich Meyer, he had planned a great history of the art of Italy. The journey was put off from year to year, the reasons being, first his preoccupation with *Wilhelm Meister*, and then the disturbed political conditions; and when it was actually undertaken in the autumn of 1797, it was restricted to Switzerland. Once again Goethe reached the St. Gotthard Hospice; but on Italy he was never to set eyes again. On the way, as on his previous Swiss journey, he spent some weeks—Christiane and his eight-year-old son August accompanied him—in Frankfort, to the great joy of his mother. It was the last time he was to see her.

After his return from Switzerland his life was very full—full and reasonably happy. It is true, things did not go as smoothly in the house on the Frauenplan as in the earlier years of Goethe's "conscience marriage," for Christiane had asserted herself a little more and often filled his house with friends that were not to Goethe's mind. We find

him with increasing frequency living by himself in Jena. His dominating interest was art ; and the precipitate of this interest between 1798 and 1800 found its way into his periodical *Propyläen*, which, like his later journal, *Ueber Kunst und Altertum*, is a receptacle for often quite inconsiderable odds and ends ; that mania for collecting which Goethe had inherited from his father, and which was to be his chief hobby in his old age, left its mark on both periodicals. It was a pity that just in those years when Schiller—his *Horen* at an end—was throwing his full energy into poetry and giving Germany the master-works of her classic stage, Goethe, instead of seconding his friend's splendid efforts, should have wasted his powers on art criticism of insignificant value. He was particularly engaged at this time on his theory of colour, and in 1806 appeared the first volume of his work on the subject, *Zur Farbenlehre*.

Schiller died on the 9th of May, 1805. Goethe was at the time seriously ill, and it was not until the following morning that Christiane ventured to bring the dire news to his bedside. He turned away and wept. Even after months had passed, he could still tell his friend, the musician Zelter : " Since I wrote to you, I have lost a friend, and in him half of my existence. Properly I ought to begin a new mode of life, but at my age that is no longer possible. And so I only look upon each day that lies immediately before me, and do what lies nearest to me, thinking of nothing beyond." And in 1806 he wrote the fine threnody, his Epilogue to the *Lied von der Glocke*, when that poem was presented in tableaux on the Weimar stage at a celebration of Schiller's memory. A nobler tribute has never been paid by one poet to another than the often quoted lines :

“Denn er war unser ! Mag das stolze Wort
 Den lauten Schmerz gewaltig übertönen !
 Er mochte sich bei uns, im sichern Port,
 Nach wildem Sturm zum Dauernden gewöhnen.
 Indessen schritt sein Geist gewaltig fort
 Ins Ewige des Wahren, Guten, Schönen,
 Und hinter ihm, in wesenlosem Scheine,
 Lag, was uns alle bändigt, das Gemeine.”

Looking back on the friendship between Goethe and Schiller, it is thus not easy to endorse the view usually expressed that Schiller's influence was an unconditional gain to our poet. Its great significance remains the fact that Schiller quickened and kept alive in Goethe an interest in poetry ; in his all too engrossing preoccupation with science and art, he might otherwise have neglected it altogether. This was, indeed, a gain ; but when we look into Goethe's reaction to his younger friend's virile intellect, the benefits are not so apparent. As his early antipathy to the poet of *Die Räuber* slackened, Goethe gradually lost sight of the essential antithesis between his own nature and his friend's ; or rather, he discovered that the antithesis was immaterial ; that they were both “approaching the same summit from different sides.” But this, I think, was an illusion. Truer would it have been to say that they were climbing different summits, albeit summits of equally dominating eminence. The illusion had unfavourable consequences for Goethe ; for it prevented him realising that Schiller's poetic method, transferred to himself, would only result in barrenness. It was a misfortune that he allowed himself to be drawn into Schiller's metaphysical and rhetorical orbit. Thus Schiller, who cherished equally erroneous illusions about

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Goethe, helped to complete the alienation from actuality of his genius ; tempted him to see more in the " idea " which his work was to express, than in the plastic embodiment of the idea in the real, where Goethe's strength had always lain. With his wonderful idealising mind, it *was* possible for Schiller to create poetic masterpieces on abstract premisses ; but when Goethe attempted it, the result fell far short of what his genius, following its natural bent, might have achieved. Thus, if a balance has to be struck, it was undoubtedly Schiller rather than Goethe who was the gainer by the friendship. To both poets it had meant a return to poetry. But the magnificent series of dramatic masterpieces from *Wallenstein* to *Wilhelm Tell* is more eloquent testimony to this return—a return, moreover, in Schiller's case from historical and abstract philosophical studies—than Goethe's disappointingly meagre record in the ten years.

Chapter Nine

AFTER SCHILLER'S DEATH

The death of Schiller made a deep incision in Goethe's life, deeper perhaps than might have been expected in view of the limitations to their intimacy. But the period of the friendship which had most significance was obviously that of which the correspondence has little to tell us, namely, the last years, when Schiller was Goethe's immediate neighbour in Weimar, and the need for letters had disappeared. Schiller perhaps ultimately did find his way to Goethe's heart to a degree which is not to be inferred from their correspondence ; his death, at least, left a blank which no other of his contemporaries was able to fill. From 1805 onwards Goethe's life took on soberer hues ; he began visibly to grow old. As we have seen, he had himself been seriously ill in those tragic May days ; indeed, he had never been more perilously near to death's door since the catastrophe that brought his Leipzig student days to a close than he was now. Christiane was unwearied in her devotion to him ; and he never forgot it. It helped to stay the widening of the breach between them. His recovery was accelerated by his old panacea for the ills of life : travel and change of scene. In the late autumn of 1805 he paid a visit to Helmstedt and Brunswick, and on the way home sought out the old patriarch of German letters, the poet Gleim, in Magdeburg. From now on, indeed, Goethe found with increasing frequency health and recuperation away from

Weimar. In the summers he regularly betook himself to spas like Karlsbad, Marienbad, Teplitz, not merely to drink the waters, but also to forget for a while in pleasant company the darkening political horizon ; and in Jena, where he retained a room for himself, he constantly sought refuge from the irksome formalities and distractions of Weimar life.

In these years political trouble loomed very large on the horizon of Europe ; the placid eighteenth century, which had been destroyed by the Revolution, was giving place to something new, strange and enigmatic. Goethe, as nonplussed as any of his contemporaries, could not find the key to it. Whatever the future might have in store, it was increasingly clear that there could be no going back ; the golden age of pre-Revolutionary calm would never return. Goethe cherished fewer illusions on this score than the political prophets of his time. But the future ? Europe, hardly extricated from the blood-bath of the Revolution, was confronted by what to most contemporaries seemed still more revolutionary changes. The new disturbing factor was Napoleon. From the quiet security of Weimar Goethe had watched Napoleon's meteoric course with intense interest ; even with respect and admiration. In this man Goethe saw the potential healer and restorer, the leader who was to bring Europe back to health and sanity. But the political situation assumed a new aspect when Goethe's little state was drawn into Napoleon's net. He had never approved of his duke's love of and reliance on Prussia ; and now, as he had foreseen, Weimar had to pay the penalty. Events moved rapidly in the autumn of 1806 after Goethe's return to Weimar ; Austria was broken ; the old Holy Roman Empire crumbled to pieces ; and the irresistible conqueror

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was on his march against Prussia, the main obstacle on the continent to his progress. Prussian troops were hurried southwards, and billeted on Weimar ; the menace, not merely to the amenities of life, but to its very security, was becoming every day more threatening. Then at last on October 14th, 1806, came the fatal Battle of Jena. The court fled—all except the Duchess Luise, who played the only heroic rôle in the débâcle ; she alone had the courage to confront Napoleon. The French soldiery threw itself on the defenceless town, pillaging, burning, and destroying. Goethe's house was invaded, and his life menaced by two drunken tirailleurs ; indeed, the danger was only averted by the bravery and presence of mind of Christiane, whom Goethe saw insulted by French officers as his mere mistress. Partly this incident, and partly the general uncertainty of life and property, matured his resolve to give his union with her that legal sanction which would ensure her respect, and provide for her in the event of his own violent death. The very next day he took steps to have his marriage solemnised. On the whole, however, Goethe came off relatively well in these terrible days ; for Marshal Ney, who was to have been quartered on Goethe's house, issued orders that so distinguished a man should be respected, and his property spared.

Peace came in 1807, a peace bought, as far as Weimar was concerned, at the cost of a humiliating and crushing indemnity ; the duke was compelled to enter Napoleon's Rheinbund. In the following year, on October 2nd, 1808, Goethe had his famous interview with the emperor at Erfurt. This meeting of two of the greatest men in Europe—Goethe was then fifty-nine, Napoleon forty—is one of those events round which the biographer is

tempted to weave peculiar significance ; and for Goethe the meeting certainly had significance. He went, it is true, unwillingly to Erfurt, for only a few days before the news had reached him of his mother's death ; but he felt that it was his duty to accompany and stand by his duke in a difficult and embarrassing situation. It is to be regretted that we are so ill informed of this historic interview, and of the subsequent meeting of Napoleon and Goethe at Ettersburg, near Weimar ; it might have outweighed many pages of Goethe's recorded conversations. Perhaps, however, it was less significant than we like to imagine ; more may have been said that was worth recording in Napoleon's conversation with Wieland, a poet likely to have been more after his heart than Goethe. The meeting, we are told in one account, lasted a full hour ; in another, only a few minutes ; and certainly the account of it which Goethe has left us—it was not written, it is true, until sixteen years after the event—would not have taken very long. In any case, it was a very informal affair ; Napoleon was at breakfast, others present, and interruptions frequent. The conversation was literary ; political matters were not touched upon, let alone state secrets. The two men met, however, in high mutual respect. Ever since the days of his "Storm and Stress" Goethe had had unbounded faith in the thought which he has voiced in *Faust*, that what matters in the world is not the word, but the creative deed ; and Napoleon was pre-eminently a man of deeds, the living exemplar of genius militant. Goethe was firmly convinced that Napoleon was irresistible ; and even when the tide began to turn against him, Goethe had but cold consolation and encouragement for the young patriots that hoped to stay—and did stay—his triumphal progress. "Shake at your

chains," he said to them, "the man is too strong for you!" The emperor, on his part, seems to have had a real respect for Goethe's genius. He told him of his admiration of *Werther*; how he had read that novel no less than seven times. He even ventured to criticise it, pointing out to Goethe how he had confused the issue of his hero's tragedy by introducing an alien and disturbing motive in the shape of ambition. And Goethe smiled and bowed, politely admitting the justice of the criticism. Napoleon, however, apparently knew more of Goethe's work than *Werther*; he greeted him—on what ground it would be difficult to say; possibly he was aware that he had translated Voltaire's *Mahomet* and *Tancrède*—as a dramatic poet; and at the later interview he suggested that Goethe should write a tragedy on Julius Caesar, which, he was confident, would be better than Voltaire's *Mort de César* which they had just witnessed in the Erfurt Theatre. "Venez à Paris! Je l'exige de vous!" And Napoleon's comment on the interview: "Voilà un homme!" has become enshrined as a tribute to his insight into Goethe's genius.

In Goethe's attitude to Napoleon the factor of patriotism played no rôle at all. Not for a moment did Goethe see in Napoleon the enemy. If the thought crossed his mind he, doubtless, brushed it aside with the reflection that, after all, Napoleon had been fighting Prussia, and that his own little state had committed a fatal error in espousing the wrong cause. At no time of his life could the word patriot be used of Goethe. His fellow-countrymen are sensitive to this lack of national pride; outsiders, on the other hand—and with equal injustice—have regarded it as a virtue which stamped him as a "good European." In point of fact, the want of patriotism in

the German writers of the pre-Napoleonic time—and beyond a flickering pride in Prussia's national hero, Frederick the Great, none possessed any—was but a natural consequence of that thing of shadows, the Holy Roman Empire. One might feel oneself a Prussian, a Saxon, a Bavarian ; but the Holy Roman Empire could not inspire patriotism ; and in the cosmopolitan eighteenth century it was more uplifting to think of oneself as the citizen of an empire that knew no narrow geographical bounds or even language. Thus Goethe's cosmopolitanism, far from being a superior, theoretically acquired standpoint, was merely the expression of political homelessness and political impotency, not necessarily a virtue at all. At the same time, this lack of patriotism had its advantages for a mind like his ; it prevented him from being too seriously obsessed by the narrow world of Weimar ; it had allowed him, in that brief and happy period in Rome, to feel less of an alien and a stranger ; it left him at liberty to admire Napoleon, and, in future days, to sympathise without national bias, with French and English aspiration and achievement.

In his heart of hearts Goethe was probably disappointed at the issue of the great " battle of the nations " at Leipzig in 1813. *Des Epimenides Erwachen*, the " Festspiel " with which he celebrated the triumph of the national cause, is something of a consolation to his patriotic admirers ; but it was written—and not very willingly written—to order ; and its allegorical shadows could hardly have given much satisfaction to the passionate young souls, who, in spite of the old poet's discouragement, had made the national rejoicings possible. *Des Epimenides Erwachen* marks the close of a decade in Goethe's life which had been quite unusually productive of literary work ; in

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fact, not since the turbulent years in Frankfort had Goethe given so good an account of himself as a man of letters. This period saw the publication of the First Part of *Faust* (1808) the novel of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809) and the drama *Pandora* (1810), as well as his treatise on colour, *Zur Farbenlehre* (1810), and three volumes of his autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811-14).

Before turning to the consideration of these works we have to look into Goethe's emotional experiences in these years ; these always meant more for his creative work than the happenings on the world's great stage. As the shadow of Schiller's death gradually passed, a new tie with life was established by his growing interest in Minna Herzlieb, foster-daughter of the publisher Frommann in Jena. They were happy days and evenings he spent in Jena towards the end of 1807, when he could throw off the formality of the Weimar Geheimrat, and listen to the eighteen-year-old Minna singing to him the songs of his youth. Few of Goethe's loves brought such a radiant and unmixed happiness into his life as Minna did, a happiness less disturbed by cruder erotic cross-currents. Perhaps, too, the passing of Schiller, whose metaphysical type of mind harmonised, as we have seen, none too well with his own, restored to Goethe's spirit something of its old resilience ; left it freer to express itself in its own way, untutored, criticised, unhampered. In Minna's company the old poet became young again ; an autumnal sunshine came into his life which awakened old memories, and stirred old dreams of the possible life-companion whom he had always sought and never found.

The immediate precipitate of Goethe's interest in Minna Herzlieb was the series of sonnets he wrote to her in December, 1807. The sonnet was a verse-form that

had little attraction for him ; Goethe was no sonneteer. He had been tempted to try his hand at it now in friendly rivalry with the dramatist Zacharias Werner, who spent several weeks in Jena at the end of the year. His sonnets are thus essentially of " literary " provenance ; it would be unreasonable to look into them for that subjective emotion which surged through his verses to his early loves, Friederike or Lili. If there is passion in them, it is of a sublimated kind, and deliberately pruned and ordered, fitted into the Procrustean bed of Petrarchan form. Before the end of the year Goethe was back in Weimar. The dream—a dream that seemed fantastically to mingle with memories of Lili—was over ; at least the sleeper had recognised that it was but a dream ; he was once more immersed in the old round of social and official duties and functions.

To this awakening of the old Eros in Goethe's heart by Minna Herzlieb we owe two of his greater works, the novel *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (*Elective Affinities*) and the uncompleted drama *Pandora*. *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* was written in the summers of 1808, 1809, and 1810 in Karlsbad, during months that must, on the whole, have been among the happiest of his life. Not merely did he find in this and other Austrian spas the physical recuperation he sought, but also a social intercourse, from that with the Austrian empress downwards, with which Weimar could not compare. The intellectual stimulus they offered was rich and varied. Again gracious and graceful ladies passed across his field of vision—Silvie von Ziegesar, Marianne von Eybenburg—and contributed to the new zest for life that Minna Herzlieb had stirred in Goethe's veins. Thus these happy summers spent away from Weimar brought rejuvenation ; were a kind of second Italy to him in his declining years.

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Die Wahlverwandtschaften is a love story, as, indeed, only *Werther* had been among his former books. But the new novel is separated by a wider gulf than even the *Faust* of these years from the *Faust* of Frankfort, or the Prometheus of *Pandora* from the *Prometheus* he had planned in his youth. It was long since Goethe had written so exclusively about love in any of his books as he does here ; and for this we have, no doubt, Minna to thank. "There is not a stroke in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*," Goethe said to Eckermann in his last years, "which has not been experienced, but not one in the form in which it was experienced." If the novel is a "confession" at all, it is one of so subtly veiled a kind that it would be unreasonable to describe it as such ; the reader who seeks in it any firm outline of biographical facts will have, indeed, a hard task. The "experience" of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is not its happenings ; it is its emotional content ; its deductions from life, all the crowding throng of "might-have-beens" which took visible form in Goethe's brain under the new emotional stimulus. To describe it as a novel in the ordinary sense would be a misnomer ; its artificial linking up of human beings can hardly interest us as a mere story. Rather is it a kind of chemical experiment, in which human souls and their affinities are the material elements ; a study of the workings of that "daimonic" attraction which metes out fate to men and women. It is the psychological "science" of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* that interests us, not its romance. Although a book about love and marriage, it is less an immediate, depiction of them than a reflective and meditated metaphysics of human relations, a scientific attempt, based on a life's experience, to probe their ultimate mysteries. But one thing it does have in common with the early

novel ; its close is tragic. The old optimist, who always eschewed tragic issues when he could, has here had the courage once again to face the ruthlessness of life. If the story of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is not a "confession," still less are we justified in tracing portraits in it. Otilie is not Minna, and to associate the Charlotte of the novel with that Charlotte who, for so many of the best years of Goethe's manhood had dominated his life, would be equally unjustified. We may find much of Goethe in the characters of Werther and Clavigo ; but to seek portrait qualities in Eduard is surely a straining of the subjective interpretation of literature. All such attempted identifications are really not material ; Goethe had travelled a long way towards poetic objectivity since *Werther* ; and the constructive artificiality, which had already thrown a blight over the completion of *Wilhelm Meister*, is still more in evidence here ; the people of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* do not live ; they are only pale shadows of men and women ; puppets moved by the not always invisible wires of abstract theory. As Goethe grew old, the love of shadows and allegorical abstractions grew upon him—as it seems, with the years, to grow upon all minds of genius. Never again was he to be the creator of men in man's own image ; never again of life as it is, real, pulsating life ; but only its abstraction, its "coloured reflection."

A book planned and written on the scheme of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is necessarily a book with a purpose ; the chemical experiment must prove or disprove the hypothesis which prompted it ; and the result of such an experiment in the domain of the spirit is necessarily its moral. What is the moral of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* ? In point of fact, many different morals have been deduced

from or read into it. We are told that it is a defence of the sanctity of marriage in an age when, under the influence of Romantic emancipation, it had come to be regarded too lightly ; that it is a vindication of the belated justice which, under the stress of circumstances, Goethe had meted out to his own Christiane. Again, the ethical bedrock of Goethe's ripe wisdom is, no doubt, dimly visible below the conflicts and problems of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, that renunciation which with increasing clearness he saw as the gate-way to the higher life. But a work of the imagination never stands or falls by its morals ; and if we will put Goethe's novel in its fairest light, it is unreasonable to dwell upon any purpose it may have. After all, might it not be best described as a book about the "amor che a nullo amato amar perdona," about the inviolability of the Eros in men's souls ? In Goethe's sixtieth year he learned again from Minna Herzlieb the old lesson that he had been taught so often before, and yet always had to learn afresh.

A less obvious, although, rightly considered, a more personal tribute to the quickening of the old poet's pulses under Minna Herzlieb's genial inspiration is that great deep poem *Pandora*, in many ways the profoundest and most difficult to comprehend that Goethe ever wrote. *Pandora* is not usually included in the smaller collections of Goethe's works. I think unjustly. Obscure it may be, but it contains some of the stateliest and most carefully chiselled verses he ever wrote. Later, as will be seen, Goethe's classicism took on, possibly under the influence of Byron's Hellenism, a warmer colour ; but in respect of form and contents, Goethe never composed anything more nobly classic than *Pandora*. The figure of Elpore, in its dim, allegorical way, is a tribute to the happiness

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that Minna had brought into his life ; and as he conceived the new Prometheus of this poem he could not but have contrasted him with the defiant Titan of his own youth, when life was still a thing of discords to him. In *Pandora* Goethe has reached spiritual peace ; no other of his greater works strikes a more jubilantly harmonious note at its close :

“ Merke :

Was zu wünschen ist, ihr unten fühlt es ;

Was zu geben sei, die wissen's droben.

Gross beginnet ihr Titanen ; aber leiten

Zu dem ewig Guten, ewig Schönen,

Ist der Götter Werk ; die lasst gewähren ! ”

Light is thrown on the Goethe of these years by another interesting woman who came into his life, Bettina von Arnim, daughter of Goethe's old love of the *Werther* time, Maximiliane von La Roche. Bettina has left us her record of him in one of the strangest, and yet most fascinating books we possess about Goethe, her *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde* (*Goethe's Correspondence with a Child*, published in 1835). For the biographer, whose object is to arrive at facts and truth, it is a quite unreliable book, romantically imagined and romantically untrue. Its untruth begins on the title-page ; for the twenty-two-year-old Bettina was anything but a child ; and if the letters she wrote to Goethe are sometimes childish, that is but a part of her Romantic affectation. This particular fiction was due to its having come to Bettina's ears that Goethe had, some years before, compared her with his own Mignon. The lack of veracity—and it might be added there is no lack of veracity in the delightful picture which the book conjures up of Goethe's mother—does not,

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however, affect its peculiar value and charm. If Bettina shares the unbalanced character of her gifted brother Clemens, she has also a goodly share of his genius ; and the reflection she has given us of Goethe in her Romantic mirror helps us to understand him in his relation to the dominant literary movement of the time. The other side of the picture is that Goethe, at whose feet Bettina laid her adoring " *Dichtung und Wahrheit*," did little more than tolerate her, and their relationship ended in a shrill discord ; Bettina allowed herself to speak insultingly of Christiane.

In 1810 appeared the first volume of Goethe's great contribution to the science of optics, *Zur Farbenlehre*. Perhaps in view of its very dubious rejection of the mathematical basis on which Newton had established the science, the word " great " may seem misplaced ; but even if its theory be untenable, this by no means invalidates its merits. Newton had long been a stumbling-block in the way of the unmathematical Goethe ; and as early as 1791 he had published *Optische Beiträge*, in which he set himself the task of refuting him ; and there was always just a little obstinacy in Goethe's refusal to try to understand the Newtonian theory. Apart from this, the *Farbenlehre* is a record of patient, empiric observation, of cautious deduction and convincing intuition—a very real contribution to optical science at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Of all Goethe's scientific writings it affords the best proof that Goethe did in fact possess the real scientist's mind. Moreover, it is written with a precision and style which were far to seek in the German scientific literature of its time.

In 1808, before either *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* or *Pandora*, there had appeared a work, which, although

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belonging in no immediate sense to this period of Goethe's life, is, nevertheless, a tribute to the spiritual harmony which he attained in these years : I mean the work which, by common consent, forms the apex of Goethe's poetry : the First Part of *Faust*. *Faust* has already been discussed in these pages, and it has to be discussed once again. Symbolically and actually it is the work of the poet's whole life, the receptacle of his deepest wisdom, the record of his spiritual development and the embodiment of his greatest imaginings.

The First Part of *Faust* is, as we have seen, essentially a creation of Goethe's youth ; not merely the Faust-Gretchen tragedy, but part of the setting for the larger Faust problem had already been given to the world in the *Fragment* published in 1790. But that *Fragment* had given no hint of the solution which Goethe was ultimately to provide for his problem. Another five-and-twenty years had, it is true, to elapse before Goethe's optimistic interpretation reached its final expression in the Second Part ; but the hope and promise of Faust's redemption are already in the First Part of 1808, grafted upon the original "tragedy of common life," a tragedy, as we have seen, of well-nigh intolerable suffering and despair.

In taking up the First Part of 1808, we are thus mainly concerned with the question : How did Goethe put into effect his new standpoint towards the tragic problem of *Faust* ? The reader is not left long in ignorance of the nature of the change ; for Goethe provides his original tragedy with three prefatory poems or prologues which leave no room for doubt concerning his new plan. First, there is a purely personal Dedication of surpassing beauty which links up the poet's own present with his past ; then comes a "Prologue in the Theatre"—a *Tasso*

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drama in miniature—the subtlest function of which is perhaps to relieve the harrowing compassion which the tragedy evokes in hearer or reader by reminding him that all its little world is but a stage, and its players are merely players ; while the third prologue, the “Prologue in Heaven,” shows us that these players are but puppets in the hands of an all-wise God. The last prologue is the most significant of all, for here the problem is given, once and for all, its new setting. The individual tragic fate of the man who dares greatly in the realm of the spirit, is framed in the Christian religion : God Himself becomes an actor in the tragedy, and the conflict ceases to be one between a mortal endowed with free will and the powers of evil, in which the mortal necessarily succumbs ; free will is, in fact, virtually eliminated ; and the Faust problem assumes gigantic proportions, indeed sublimity, as a conflict between the powers of Good and Evil in the world. In this conflict the Good necessarily triumphs—the optimist Goethe could see no other issue—or rather Evil is bereft of its antagonism to Good, and as it were, harmonised and coalesced with it. Faust is thus, at the outset, exonerated from his tragic guilt ; the sting is taken out of his tragedy. “Knowst thou my servant Faust ? ” the Lord asks Mephistopheles. “Fürwahr” is the answer :

“Fürwahr ! er dient euch auf besondre Weise.
Nicht irdisch ist des Toren Trank noch Speise.
Ihn treibt die Gährung in die Ferne,
Er ist sich seiner Tollheit halb bewusst ;
Vom Himmel fordert er die schönsten Sterne,
Und von der Erde jede höchste Lust,
Und alle Näh und alle Ferne
Befriedigt nicht die tiefbewegte Brust.

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DER HERR.

“ Wenn er mir jetzt auch nur verworren dient,
So werd’ ich ihn bald in die Klarheit führen.
Weiss doch der Gärtner, wenn das Bäumchen grünt,
Dass Blüt’ und Frucht die künft’gen Jahre zieren.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

“ Was wettet ihr ? den sollt ihr noch verlieren,
Wenn ihr mir die Erlaubnis gebt,
Ihn meine Strasse sacht zu führen !

DER HERR.

“ So lang er auf der Erde lebt,
So lange sei dir’s nicht verboten.
Es irrt der Mensch so lang er strebt. . . .

Zieh’ diesen Geist von seinem Urquell ab,
Und führ’ ihn, kannst du ihn erfassen,
Auf deinem Wege mit herab,
Und steh’ beschämt, wenn du bekennen musst :
Ein guter Mensch in seinem dunklen Drange
Ist sich des rechten Weges wohl bewusst.”

The good man can never be blind to the true path ; all men must err on their dark way ; and error is neither guilt nor sin. Faust’s destiny, we are assured, lies in God’s hands, and He will lead him to victory against all the powers of negation. Thus the tragedy of Faust has become a “ Divine Comedy ” ; a message to the tragic sufferer not to despair, for God is good. The temptation of the devil—now no longer a devil but a servant of God—is framed in a conception of the world where sin and evil have no substantial existence ; no longer is the salvation

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of man bound up with the choice between right and wrong ; it cannot be denied to the mortal who merely errs, error being but another name for the inadequacy of human vision. It is made dependent on the keeping alive within him of the spark of aspiration, the power to strive, the will to " rise on his dead self to higher things." As long as man's will to realise himself is not dead, he remains God's servant ; and God will not let His servant fall.

The early *Faust* poem gives no indication of the nature of the bargain which Faust makes with Mephistopheles. Doubtless, it was originally conceived on the traditional lines of the Volksbuch. But the new bargain had to be adapted to the perspective created by that greater bargain which Mephistopheles has made with God. The condition of Mephistopheles' triumph is no longer success in the simple task of dragging Faust down into the mire, of exposing him to temptations which he cannot resist—these were, of course, in the legend and the original plan amply sufficient to bring about Faust's undoing—but in killing his soul, in destroying his better self, the godlike in him. Mephistopheles' task is not to " ruin " Faust, to involve him in sin and debasement, but to satiate him : to bring his soul into that apathetic equilibrium, when every desire in him is extinguished. On this condition the new contract is framed :

" Werd' ich beruhigt je mich auf ein Faulbett legen,
So sei es gleich um mich getan !
Kannst du mich schmeichelnd je belügen,
Dass ich mir selbst gefallen mag,
Kannst du mich mit Genuss betrügen—
Das sei für mich der letzte Tag !
Die Wette biet' ich !

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“Werd’ ich zum Augenblicke sagen :
Verweile doch ! du bist so schön !
Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen,
Dann will ich gern zu Grunde gehn !
Dann mag die Totenglocke schallen,
Dann bist du deines Dienstes frei,
Die Uhr mag stehn, der Zeiger fallen,
Es sei die Zeit für mich vorbei ! ”

With this formulation of the wager between Faust and Mephistopheles, and the solemn signing of the contract in Faust’s blood, the purely dramatic interest in Faust’s ultimate personal fate ceases. We now know the inevitable close : Mephistopheles cannot triumph ; his challenge to provide his victim with satisfying happiness is doomed to failure. The drama becomes one long chain of futile efforts on the part of the tempter to attain this end, first in the narrow world of personal emotion, and then in the great world of a far-flung activity ; and it is in these episodes, rather than in the central problem of Faust’s development and fate, that the poetic interest from now on lies.

With such fundamental change in the spiritual vista of the poem, consistency or unity was unattainable ; no explanation or interpretation can reconcile the incorporation of the ruthless tragedy of Faust’s love for Margarete in the new “world-drama.” Merely to provide that tragedy with a spacious framework of optimism could not mitigate the intense woe and suffering it contains ; it would have been small consolation to Faust and Gretchen to know that they were enmeshed in a net of evil devised—like the misfortunes and sufferings of Job—for their undoing by God Himself. Nor does it bring conviction

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to the harrowed beholder to be assured that this evil is but an instrument in the hand of the All Good ; that all ways lead to goodness, to God. No one can say that Goethe has succeeded in harmonizing the tragedy with his later conviction of the insufficiency of tragedy ; indeed, the whole original *Faust* drama would have had to be remodelled to bring it into line with this untragic conception of life. Wisely, Goethe did not try to blunt the poignancy of the old human conflict ; he let the inconsistencies stand.

Faust is the most heterogeneous of all Goethe's works ; it is a thing of broken ends, unconvincing joins, tantalisingly fragmentary, full of unsolved poetic problems. Goethe's dilatory inability to finish his drama in one mood and at one period of his life has brought confusion upon its theme, which no interpretative ingenuity can reduce to order. *Faust* accompanied its creator through his whole life ; and it has become the epitome of that great life, the receptacle of its highest wisdom. Regarded in this light, its changing form and inconsistencies cease to be reprehensible defects, but rather a source of perennial interest to the seeker after a solution of the life-riddle.

Chapter Ten

INDIAN SUMMER

The years were moving on apace. When 1815 saw the final overthrow of Napoleon, Goethe was sixty-six. And yet this old man, in spite of a state of health that was by no means robust, could not grow old ; he clung tenaciously to life. The only sign, indeed, of the encroachment of the years was an increasing tendency to indulge in retrospect, a growing desire to "sum up his existence." During the years of the Napoleonic unrest his works had been published in Tübingen by Cotta in a stately edition ; and it was, in the first instance, the wish to supply these works with a commentary and binding matrix that led to the writing of his Autobiography. Three volumes of that work appeared under the title : *Aus meinem Leben : Dichtung und Wahrheit*, between 1811 and 1814 ; the fourth and last was held back until the very end of the poet's life. Even in its completed form, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* is only an autobiography of the young Goethe ; it closes with his departure for Weimar in 1775. Goethe had a peculiar reluctance to write about any part of his Weimar life. As far as consideration for the living was concerned, he could have arranged—as he did in the case of his own correspondence with Schiller—for sufficient delay in the publication that no susceptibilities might be hurt. But no ! Weimar, his relations to the ducal house and Charlotte von Stein, were apparently sacrosanct,

not meant for the vulgar gaze ; he could not bring himself to submit them to the critical analysis to which he had subjected his earlier life. And yet it had clearly been his intention that *Dichtung und Wahrheit* should be continued ; the account of his Italian journey published in 1816-17, was definitely described as a continuation ; and the other accounts of journeys which he has left us, including such works as *Die Campagne in Frankreich* and *Die Belagerung von Mainz*, were all blocks which were, no doubt, intended ultimately to be built into the great structure. It is noticeable, however, that these supplements deal mainly with outward happenings and experiences, not in the same degree as the Autobiography proper, with the poet's spiritual and emotional life. Still less can the dull annals, *Tag- und Jahreshefte*, of Goethe's later years be regarded as a surrogate for the continuation of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. That continuation we have to seek and distil from the more intimate records of letters, diaries and conversations.

Of such records we possess an embarrassing abundance. If we piece them together, there are days together when our knowledge is so full that we can follow the poet's life from hour to hour, when hardly anything that occupied his time escapes us. We know, indeed, more of the intimacies—often trivial enough—of that part of Goethe's life which lay within the nineteenth century than we have ever known of any man's. And when one remembers that Goethe was a cynosure for the eyes of all Europe, and that everyone who came into personal contact with him felt the need of putting his impressions on record, one may fairly say that the fierce light that beats on intellectual thrones did not spare him. For the biographer this wealth of material is a doubtful advantage ; it confuses

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him rather than aids him in his efforts to interpret the inner life of Goethe ; he misses, above all, that guidance through the intricacies and details which the poet himself provided for the first twenty-six years.

By common consent *Dichtung und Wahrheit* is one of the great autobiographies of the world's literature ; it remains to this day perhaps the most attractive and generally read of Goethe's prose writings, and that in spite of a heaviness of style—notably as the work draws towards its close—and often garrulous irrelevancy to the main issues. But there are great pages in this book—greater Goethe never wrote—and their excellence lies not in any unvarnished reproduction of the truth ; but in the fact that that truth is gilded by poetry, the poetry which in the old Aristotelian sense is more truthful than history. When Goethe called his life-story *Truth and Poetry*, he did not, of course, mean to mingle fiction with fact, to romance about himself as Bettina had romanced about him in her *Correspondence with a Child*. On the contrary, we have evidence that he gave himself the greatest pains to tell the truth and nothing but the truth. This, however, was not easy ; for when he published his first volume, he had already passed his sixtieth year, and was thus separated from the events he described by something like forty years. These years may have given him a vantage-ground of objectivity, and have allowed him to write about himself impersonally, as he had, for example, written about Winkelmann and Hackert ; but they also brought serious disadvantages. He was obliged to collect his materials as laboriously as if he had been merely an on-looker and an outsider. This left room for inaccuracies when memory or the materials he had at his disposal proved inadequate.

It was not, however, to exonerate such possible "untruths" that Goethe introduced the word "Dichtung" into his title; he wished rather to tell us that he would interpret his youth by the light of the acquired wisdom of later years, and demonstrate how his life had been moulded and guided by a Higher Power. This did not involve the suppression of any truth; but it did necessitate changes in the proportions of his narrative. Emphasis had to be laid upon happenings and experiences which, apparently of small significance at the moment, had acquired real or symbolic significance in the light of subsequent developments; while other things—apparently of greater moment at the time—are passed lightly over. Thus by virtue of the "Dichtung" in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* Goethe will eliminate, as it were, the apparent purposelessness in life, as it is lived; and bear testimony to "the divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will."

The most serious drawback of Goethe's Autobiography is its lack of spontaneity; one misses acutely the spirit of youth in this record of one of the most delightful youth-times in the annals of literature. The figures that appear in it seem too often to be moved like chess-figures across the board; its apophthegmatic dogmatism and its heavy periods are wearisome and often chilling. This is assuredly not Goethe's life as it was lived—for that we have to turn to *Götz* and *Werther* and *Clavigo*, and the early letters—it is only a meditated reconstruction of it. But that, too, is precious; for behind *Dichtung und Wahrheit* there is a philosophy of life which is a rarer thing in autobiographical works than faithful impressionism. Thus if Goethe's autobiography may be a less personal and subjective book—it is, for instance, very much less intimate

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than Rousseau's *Confessions*—than might have been expected from a writer whose strength always lay in his subjectivity, it remains a great book about the art of living.

It is time, however, to take up again the thread of Goethe's life. Nearly four months of the latter part of 1814 were spent on a visit to Frankfort and the Rhineland. Part of this journey is described with remarkable freshness in the first volume of Goethe's new periodical *Ueber Kunst und Altertum*. But Goethe has, of course, nothing to say here of his two outstanding experiences—experiences which he would assuredly not have neglected, had this been a chapter of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*: his acquaintance with Marianne Jung, adopted daughter and, shortly after, wife of a Frankfort merchant Willemer, and with Sulpiz Boisserée in Heidelberg. To the first we owe the best inspiration of *Der Westöstliche Divan*; the second brought about in Goethe a subtle change of attitude to the Roman Catholic faith. The news of the Battle of Leipzig overtook Goethe in Frankfort on October 18th. It would have been too much to expect that his response to his fellow-countrymen's enthusiasm would be wholehearted—he could not believe that this victory foreshadowed the end of the invincible conqueror who had held Europe in his grip—but he must have felt some pride in the news, and cherished hopes that the years of political unrest were over. As we have seen, he even allowed himself to be persuaded to celebrate the occasion by writing for Berlin an allegorical “Festspiel,” *Des Epimenides Erwachen*.

Goethe's political pessimism proved only too well justified, before the Vienna Congress was long under way; the overthrow of Napoleon only made room for Prince Metternich; and the real political freedom of the German

peoples seemed as far off as ever. The Congress, it is true, conferred outward glory upon Weimar ; the duchy was converted into a grand duchy and its territory was doubled. But this left Goethe cold. The duke was full of zeal to conform to the spirit of the time, and boldly gave his state a new constitution which made considerable concessions to the rising democracy. But such measures met with no sympathy or approval from his quondam minister of state, who disliked with all his old eighteenth-century conservatism everything that savoured of majority rule. For Goethe the minority was always in the right ; and many a bitter word escaped him in those days about the folly of allowing bakers and butchers and apothecaries to interfere in the high affairs of state. In particular, he disapproved of his duke's decision that, within his territory, the press should be unfettered. It may be disappointing to find Goethe's great mind on the side of reaction and opposed to what we all recognise now as progress in human affairs ; but we have also to admit that the course of events justified only too well his caution, and made manifest the short-sightedness of the duke of Weimar. For there were stormy days ahead. The Weimar state was seriously involved in the disrupting and revolutionary movements of the next few years ; the freedom of the press—as was perhaps only to be expected when Weimar pursued a policy at variance with her neighbours—was abused, until it ultimately became necessary for Metternich to intervene and curb it ; Jena became a hotbed of frothy demagogism, and the celebration of the Reformation festival in the Wartburg in the autumn of 1817 degenerated into a threatening political demonstration. It cannot be denied that all this seemed to justify Goethe's unsympathetic attitude to political change. The truth is—

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and Goethe may have seen it in this light—that, however laudable Karl August's intentions were, it was only courting disaster to adopt a policy of freedom, and introduce reforms in accordance with it, while the states around him persisted in their adherence to the principles of the old régime. Here lay the wisdom and justification of the old poet's opposition ; at the same time, the fact remains that he did range himself with the forces of reaction.

Thus Goethe was—there is no mincing words—without understanding or sympathy for the new political orientation. While in poetry, in science and the arts, even, as we shall see, in the new problems of industrialism, Goethe did see further and deeper than most of his contemporaries, his eyes were strangely blinkered when it was a question of political foresight. He remained to the last, in his conception of the relation of ruler and ruled, a pre-Revolutionary theorist. Much of Carlyle's intransigency came from the support he found for it in Goethe's conservatism. Goethe believed in the strong hand ; and when he was himself in the position to wield it, he wielded it magisterially. At no time did he see eye to eye with his sovereign in the guidance of their little ship of state. In older days his opposition had been to the duke's policy of an alliance with Prussia, a policy which Goethe saw—and no doubt saw rightly—had its roots in the duke's insensate craving for military glory and for a wider sphere of action and influence in European politics ; now it was opposition to what later generations are inclined to put to the credit of the duke, his endeavour to meet the new time half-way. In the personal relations of the two men the result was the same : the opening up of gulfs that became ever wider and were even now wellnigh unbridgeable.

Disappointed and disillusioned by such developments,

Goethe turned his reviving energies to those fields that were peculiarly his own : to the University of Jena and the theatre. This was now the more possible as his official position in the Grand Duchy was restricted to the functions of "Kultusminister," that is to say, minister of education and the fine arts. This still left him great powers and responsibilities, even if they were not concerned with politics in the wider sense. Perhaps even here, too, he was something of a drag on the wheel. In the matter of the university, things went fairly smoothly ; for the poet had a free hand, the duke having little or no interest in education and learning. But the theatre offered many points of friction ; for the duke's tastes had to be humoured rather than Goethe's own ; his mistress, Caroline Jagemann and her friends to be favoured in the distribution of rôles. This must have been the more galling, as Goethe turned with youthfully active, if somewhat tyrannical zeal, to the reform of the theatre ; indeed, at no previous period had he regarded his functions as theatre director so seriously as now. Suddenly, however, into the midst of all his admirable plans to make the little Weimar theatre the worthiest in Germany fell a thunderbolt, which contributed more to the estrangement of duke and poet than all their political differences. A travelling company of actors wished to perform a translation of a French *mélodrame* that had whetted the jaded appetites of playgoers beyond the French frontier : *Le chien d'Aubry*. The main attraction of the play was not itself, but the appearance in it of a trained dog. Goethe who, in any case, disliked dogs, indignantly refused to have his classic stage desecrated. But the duke, whose tastes in theatrical matters were, in spite of his apparent pleasure in French classic tragedies, by no means so nice, did not

see why there should be so much fuss ; he thought he would quite well like to see the dog. He issued orders accordingly. Goethe fled to Jena, and a few days later, sent in his resignation as director of the theatre. So that dream, too—the dream that had once been Wilhelm Meister's—was over. Could anything throw a sharper light on the hollowness of the relations between the poet and his prince ? To dismiss—for the duke knew well that his action could only mean Goethe's resignation—the greatest poet of Germany from the post that he was best qualified to fill with honour, and all for the sake of a performing poodle ! Of all the petty annoyances and tyrannies under which Goethe suffered in these years, surely this was the worst ! For twenty years he had guided the destinies of the Weimar theatre, and although there may be much to criticise in his barren efforts to impose upon the living theatre the bloodless ideals of an effete classicism—to turn back the hands of the clock—yet none could deny that in that long period he had given his theatre a place of honour in the world of letters.

Thus a greater gulf than ever opened up between sovereign and minister, a gulf that nothing closed again. If ever there was a time when Goethe's thoughts must have reverted to the first great crisis in his relations with Weimar, on the eve of his journey to Italy—it must have been now. And yet Goethe did not—outwardly at least—take it so bitterly to heart as might have been expected ; the old eighteenth-century loyalty to princes which he had put on Tasso's lips, was in his blood.

In 1816 Goethe suffered a grievous personal loss by the death of his wife Christiane. When the grave closed over her, he felt that an epoch of his life had come to an end. It had been a great experiment, this union ; an

experiment the outcome of which no one, least of all, Goethe himself, could have foreseen, when he first found his "forest flower" in the Weimar park after his return from Italy. No love of Goethe's life gave less promise of permanence than this, and yet it proved to be the most lasting of them all. It could not be said that it had brought real companionship, or any great or deep happiness ; at most, it gave Goethe a certain material comfort, a home and a son. Now that death had rung down the curtain, he saw Christiane only in the kindest of lights :

" Du versuchst, o Sonne, vergebens
Durch die düstren Wolken zu scheinen !
Der ganze Gewinn meines Lebens
Ist ihren Verlust zu beweinen."

And in a letter two weeks later : " I will not deny to you—and why should one pretend otherwise ?—that my state of mind was nigh to despair."

The death of Christiane left a great gap in the house on the Frauenplan ; it made the old man the more anxious to find for it a new mistress in the shape of a daughter-in-law. A bride was selected for August, Ottilie von Pogwisch, the daughter of a noble family associated with the Weimar court ; and the marriage, in which love had no share, took place in June, 1817. In the following April Goethe's first grandson was born. Goethe opened his heart to his daughter-in-law ; and for a year or two his home-life was sunny and pleasant ; pleasanter than it had been for some years back. But this did not last ; the horizon began to darken again, and we find Goethe again with increasing frequency in Jena to avoid the frivolous company with which Ottilie filled his house.

The great spiritual event of these years was Goethe's

love for Marianne von Willemer and his acquaintance with the poetry of the Persian poet Hafiz. The one touched anew the springs of his emotional nature ; the other kindled the lyric poet in him again. Marianne, as we have seen, had been brought up by Willemer with his own daughters. She was of somewhat obscure Austrian origin, and had been for a time an actress. Shortly after Goethe's first meeting with her—it was on her thirtieth birthday, November 25th, 1814—Willemer, a widower for the second time, had made Marianne his wife.

Of the two types of women between which Goethe's taste vacillated, the restful and stately, and the mercurial, she belonged to the latter. She was no motherly Charlotte von Stein, but a woman of infinitely lively and facile spirit, a Mignon come to years of maturity, a Christiane, but with all that Christiane lacked to make her the real companion of a poet : intellect and genius. And the old poet found his love for Marianne returned, and ardently returned. The lyric chord was set vibrating in him as it had not vibrated for many a year, and it kindled an unsuspected and rich vein of lyric expression in Marianne herself. An emotional warmth which had been absent from Goethe's verses for a decade and more, suddenly came back, and came back with the irresistible force of a flood that has broken its dams. To Marianne Willemer belongs the credit of having inspired Goethe to write more poetry than all his other loves together. There is none of Goethe's passions on which one dwells with more pleasure than this ; in none was the erotic element so spiritualised and clarified, so transfigured into an ideal as here. The old poet faced it with the consciousness that it could only be a dream, a dream without possible substance. The calm "Entsagung" of these latter years

pervades it from the beginning, and resolves it into a harmony without a discordant note. I often think that Marianne was the best of all Goethe's loves ; she stood to him in a mystic way for all the might-have-beens that poor Christiane was powerless to realise ; and which neither Friederike nor Lili, neither Charlotte von Stein nor Minna Herzlieb could ever have realised. If congenial temperament and poetic gifts of a high order—for "Suleika's" contributions to the *Divan* are not inferior in inspiration and beauty to the old master's own—could have made any woman a worthy life-partner to the great poet, that woman was Marianne.

Marianne gave the *Westöstliche Divan* its emotional substance and inspiration ; Hafiz, the Persian poet of the fourteenth century, provided its outward form and expression. The vessel, indeed, was prepared for the contents before Goethe met Marianne at all. In 1812 and 1813 the Viennese orientalist, Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, had published his translation of the *Divan* of Hafiz, and opened up to Goethe, in his disillusionment with the western world, a new spiritual home in the East :

" Nord und West und Süd zersplittern,
 Throne bersten, Reiche zittern,
 Flüchte du, im reinen Osten
 Patriarchenluft zu kosten,
 Unter Lieben, Trinken, Singen
 Soll dich Chisers Quell verjüngen."

He had already begun to imitate the Persian poet's distichs in the summer of 1814. This spiritual journey of Goethe to the East is, indeed, something of a miracle ; it is one of the most unexpected happenings in a life full enough of such vicissitudes. That he, who had so long

swathed himself in the stately robe of ancient Greece should now have put on the kaftan and the fez, have taken his water-pipe and sat cross-legged in Eastern bazaars, is surely one of the strangest transformations of all among the many costumes Goethe donned in the great masquerade of his life. One of the latest of his biographers, Emil Ludwig, has aptly described it as a kind of Italian journey of Goethe's declining years ; and he rightly adds that it was the only one of all Goethe's journeys that brought no disenchantment, left no trace of disillusionment behind it.

And yet it may be questioned how far Goethe actually did in spirit make this adventurous journey. Did he whose soul, like his Iphigenie's, had so long "sought the land of the Greeks," ever really pass beyond Hellas and penetrate into the limitless and un-Greek mysticism of the East ? Is the *Divan* not "eastern" merely in its outward costume and background, in its fiction of the love of Hatem, the old poet with the white locks, for the youthful Suleika, while its spiritual contents remain essentially "western" ? In other words, was Goethe's orientalism really more than skin deep, in spite of all the learning which he displays in the notes to his volume ? At no time do we find Goethe expressing sympathy for the eastern mind ; and in earlier life, at least, its mystic asceticism was as abhorrent to him as the similar element in medieval Christianity. The years had, it is true, blunted something of this antagonism. Moreover, Goethe's own lyric art had been gradually taking on an almost oriental quality of concentrated, anti-thetic expression ; the old lyric effulgence was being displaced by a sharp and hard crystalline form. The gnomic couplet, in which he distilled the wisdom of his old age, had unmistakable oriental affinities ; and this it was, rather than any real sympathy for the oriental attitude to

life that led him half-way to meet Hafiz. The greater part of the *Westöstliche Divan* is poetry of this kind—the Germans call it “Spruchdichtung”—and it is only when Suleika touches the old poet’s heart by her youthful freshness that the old spontaneous note in his lyric returns. I have said that Marianne Willemer inspired more poetry than all Goethe’s other loves together ; but the reservation has to be added that a great deal of *Der westöstliche Divan* is not lyric poetry in the old sense at all. Nor can it vie with the kaleidoscopic variety of Goethe’s earlier verse ; it is all, as it were, in one form and in one key. It flows easily and steadily ; but one lives through more emotional experience in twenty pages of the early *Gedichte* than in all this volume.

One other poet shared the chief place with Hafiz in Goethe’s heart during these years, Byron. Again, East and West meet and mingle in Byron. The relation of Goethe to the great English poet is one of the problematic things in Goethe’s life. It would be absurd to claim that Byron was, or could ever have been a sympathetic personality to Goethe. The two men never met, and had they met, it is difficult to think that they could have become friends ; rather the disillusionment on both sides would have been bitter. Neither poet understood the other ; and Goethe’s estimate of Byron’s literary genius often puts our confidence in his critical acumen to a hard strain. The truth is, Goethe took Byron to his heart, not because he had any real sympathy for his unruly militancy ; but rather because he fancied he saw in him a reincarnation of his own far-off youth ; he re-lived, as it were, his own past in him. More than this, Byron’s meteoric career afford him a glimpse of a wider, bigger life of the man of letters—something that had been denied

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Goethe in his own youth, hedged round, as he had been, by the narrow provincialism and middle-class domination of his own land. This English peer, the poet as a man of action, lived the great life ; he was the embodiment of revolt ; he had suffered banishment ; and had finally given his life in heroic self-sacrifice for a great cause. Such was Byron in Goethe's eyes : a tremendous personality, a veritable Napoleon of poetry. And for Goethe, personality was always the highest thing in the world.

“ Volk und Knecht und Überwinder,
Sie gestehn zu jeder Zeit :
Höchstes Glück der Erdenkinder
Sei nur die Persönlichkeit,”

he had sung in his *Westöstliche Divan* ; and in the notes to that work he had added : “ Not talents, not skill in doing this or that, really make the man of action ; it is personality on which everything depends, not talents.” Goethe's unbounded—as we may think, unjustified—admiration for Byron was doubtless tinged, as so much that passed through Goethe's mind in these somber years, with regretful reflections of how much he had not been able to achieve in his own life ; here, he felt, was the green tree of life, not the grey theory, amidst which so much of his own career had perforce been passed. This is some explanation of the extravagant pleasure—the greatest, perhaps, of his later years—which the old poet felt when Byron laid his homage at his feet with his dedication of *Sardanapalus* : “ To the Illustrious Goethe a stranger presumes to offer the homage of a literary vassal to his liege Lord, the first of existing writers, who has created the literature of his own country and illustrated that of Europe.” If there had ever been any danger of Goethe sinking into the spiritual quietism

of the East, Byron brought him back again to Greece, that Greece in which his Faust and Helena had been for so many years languishing and waiting for poetic deliverance. And in Goethe's mind, Byron's death that Greece might be free, was perhaps a greater achievement for humanity than his own Faust's reclamation of land from the sea on which new men might toil and live.

Chapter Eleven

OLD AGE

Most of Goethe's biographers, filled with admiration for the great Olympian, to whom it was granted to complete the magnificent pyramid of his existence so boldly planned in young years, have dwelt on little else in these closing years but the triumphant consummation of his career. The patriarch of the world of letters, the Goethe who received the homage of all Europe, who lived to put the finishing touch to his greatest edifice, *Faust*, and who passed out in the odour of the highest wisdom with the words "more light" upon his lips—this is the Goethe with whom we have been made most familiar. What they have not dwelt upon is the sadness and even tragedy of the close of this great life. In these late years Goethe said to Eckermann: "I have always been praised as a man especially favoured by fortune; nor will I complain and grumble about the course of my life. But at bottom it has been nothing but toil and trouble, and I may, indeed, say that in all my seventy-five years I have never enjoyed four weeks of real wellbeing." And in truth the last years were sombre. Goethe's many visitors—and there were numerous Englishmen among them—dwell in their records on the lordly mansion with its thirty rooms, its museum-like wealth of sculpture and objects of art, its scientific collections, its abundant testimony to a noble,

cultured taste. They tell us of their courtly reception by the old monarch, pompously decked in his star and orders, who, stiff and chilling, often treated them with very monarchical condescension. But of what lay behind this outward glory, they know nothing.

In truth, beneath the surface, life was running far from smoothly in the Goethe household. Goethe's son August was a growing source of worry and anxiety ; he had inherited nothing of his father's stability of character ; his upbringing had been without method or discipline—strange, when one thinks how interested Goethe had been all his life long in problems of education !—and as he came to man's estate, his life became more and more an aimless drifting, which made him an easy prey to licentiousness and drunkenness. His marriage to Ottilie von Pogwisch, instead of restoring his equilibrium, seems to have completed his undoing. And Ottilie herself? She flits gracefully through the pages of Goethe's biographers as an engaging figure who presided charmingly at Goethe's table when he entertained his guests, who brought life and light into the old man's days. But here, too, unfortunately, there was a reverse to the medal. Under Ottilie's régime Goethe's house was hardly a pleasanter place than it had been in Christiane's days ; and more frequently than ever, he was compelled to seek refuge in Jena from the upsetting disturbances for which her mismanagement and frivolity were responsible. With as little character as her worthless husband, she coquetted with every acceptable male guest—and Englishmen seem to have been particularly favoured—squandered money on dress and finery, and neglected house and children. These children—there were three, two boys and a girl, of whom the last had certainly no Goethe blood in her veins—grew

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up untended, unchecked, noisy and unruly, a constant disturbance to their old grandfather who yet drew such consolation from them as he could. Goethe had sometimes to attend to the simplest domestic duties, while his daughter-in-law flaunted in Weimar society ; and when the stately reception of his guests was over, his night was often rendered hideous by the brawls overhead between Ottilie and his drunken son. Orderly and punctual to excess in all things, how Goethe must have suffered under all this ! There is a grim irony in the fact that, for the benefit of these worthless heirs, he should, in these years, have successfully negotiated—Goethe was always a shrewd business man—a fifty years' copyright in his works. He was himself, of course, amply provided for in the years he had still to live ; not merely had he a considerable income from the sale of his works ; he also enjoyed what was then a princely salary from the state, in return, as he frankly put it to the duke, for the fame and distinction which his presence in Weimar conferred on the town. But under Ottilie's control of his house money was needed ; and if he did not often himself entertain on a lavish scale, his son and daughter-in-law had no qualms about doing so on their own account.

Can it be wondered that the old man contemplated for a brief space a new marriage ? The duke's services were called into requisition in the matter, and the plan, needless to say, was the occasion of a stormy scene with August and Ottilie who saw themselves in danger of being cut out of their inheritance. In the proposed marriage love had its share. In the summer of 1823, at Marienbad, Goethe's fancy had been captivated by a young girl, Ulrike von Levetzow, who on her part did not seem averse from the homage of the famous poet and the glamour of his

great name. Fortunately, for Goethe as for Ulrike, nothing came of the foolish plan ; and she, the very last link in Goethe's emotional life, lived on, unmarried, almost into the twentieth century. Her death occurred in 1899. To look upon this, Goethe's last passion, as mere senile eroticism is a little harsh ; for behind it was certainly the practical consideration of giving his home, laid waste by August and Ottilie, a new head. But there is something finer and subtler to be read out of the wonderful *Marienbader Elegie* in the *Trilogie der Leidenschaft*, the poet's last great lyrically inspired poem, his final tribute on the altar of Eros. I have described each of Goethe's loves as the muse of a definite phase of his life ; Ulrike does not belie this representative character ; but she is not to be thought of as the love and the muse of a very old man, but rather as the personification of retrospection, of a passionate re-living of the emotional memories of earlier days. There was nothing in Goethe's fancy for this child to be compared with the last real flame that had warmed his old heart, the passion for Marianne Willemer which has given us the *Westöstliche Divan* ; rather did Goethe see in her, in his mystic, allegorising way, the Phoenix of his dead past ; in her blended the memory that refused most obstinately to be effaced, that of Lili Schönemann. Ulrike was the last phantom of a happiness, that had always "drawn him upwards and onwards,"—the "Ewigweibliche" of the closing lines of *Faust* ; but a happiness that had always eluded his grasp.

It was indeed a lonely life to which Goethe was condemned in these last years. One by one, the old friends were inevitably passing out into the great darkness ; Christiane had begun the melancholy procession in 1816 ; literary links with the past were snapped by the deaths of

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Fritz Jacobi and Fritz Stolberg in 1819 ; Charlotte von Stein, with whom something of a reconciliation had taken place in the last years, died in 1827 ; the duke in 1828, and the Duchess Luise, the last link between Goethe and the court, in 1830. There were very few left now with whom Goethe could still exchange the intimate "du," and these not the worthiest of his intimacy. Knebel, his senior, who also outlived him, was perhaps the best of these ; the friendship with him had gone back to the very beginnings of his Weimar life. It had never been really broken, although often suspended for a longer time than the short distance between Weimar and Jena warranted. But Goethe's intimacy with the Swiss, Heinrich Meyer, is difficult to explain, and still more of a mystery is his long and faithful attachment to the Berlin musician Zelter. With Duke Karl August Goethe's relations had never been the same again after the political differences of the Napoleonic time and the affair of the performing poodle ; but appearances were kept up. Now that Goethe was relieved of all official duties, there was little to bring them together ; but, no doubt, in these days of increasing isolation the personal relations between the two men did take on a warmer colouring. When in 1825 the jubilee of the duke's accession was celebrated, he insisted on that of Goethe's entry into Weimar being associated with it.

A new generation had meanwhile grown up at court, and Goethe held himself stiffly apart from it. He even caused some jealousy by dedicating his *Correspondence with Schiller*, published in 1828 and 1829, to the King of Bavaria. There was a similar estrangement between Goethe and the new generation of men of letters in Germany, none of whom approached him except with some fear and trembling. Invested although he was by the

new Romantic school as one of its high-priests, he had at heart little real understanding for their aims or their world ; he who had dwelt on Olympian heights and dallied in Hafiz' garden, never penetrated far into the great Romantic forest, or felt the magic of the Romantic night. For the weary and the broken-hearted, the outcasts of genius, in the Romantic age, for unbalanced poets like Heinrich von Kleist, he could have no fellow-feeling or real compassion ; the lyric genius of Heine—whose delightful story of his visit to Weimar, when he could talk of nothing to Goethe but the cherries he had plucked by the wayside, is familiar—found no recognition ; and even when Goethe's feelings were manifestly friendly, as in the case of the great Austrian, Grillparzer, his pompous and forbidding manner led to misunderstandings and discouragement.

And yet Goethe was not uninfluenced by the Romantic constellation under which his declining years were passed. Less apparently affected by its aesthetic doctrines than the quite unromantic Schiller had been, he had been more appreciative of its imaginative achievement. It would, indeed, have been strange had he been insensitive to the devotion of the Romanticists laid at his feet, and the incense they burned before him ; and in the First Part of *Faust* he had, as we have seen, given Romanticism a poem which may well be claimed as the greatest of its monuments. Nor is it merely fancy to see in Goethe's preoccupation with the poetry of the East a great Romantic adventure ; for it was the Romanticists who had opened up this wonderland to Western Europe. They, under Friedrich Schlegel's guidance, had sought and found in the Orient a surrogate for the traditional Romantic trappings which had begun to wear threadbare by constant reiteration ; and

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Der Westöstliche Divan was a work after their own heart, as definite a landmark in the progress of Romanticism as any creation of a purely Romantic poet. Of deeper significance than these outward points of contact with the contemporary movement was the change that came over Goethe in these late years in his attitude to the spiritual and the unseen. Not since his enthusiasm for Spinoza in early years had Goethe found a thinker so much after his own heart as the metaphysician of Romanticism, Schelling ; and the "heathen" Goethe of the years of classical ascendancy was gradually giving place to a Goethe who—even it might be still too much to call him Christian—at least brought to the Christian tradition, and to the Mother Church which had cast so compelling a spell over the Romantic mind, sympathy and understanding. It is, indeed, a transformation to find the Goethe who, in Italy, had turned with aversion from so much of its Christian art, and who was repelled by the Gothic profusion of the Milan Cathedral, now interesting himself warmly in the agitation which his new friend Boisserée had set on foot for the restoration of the cathedral of Cologne. Thus Goethe was by no means so impervious to the spiritual message of Romanticism as is sometimes thought ; and that often quoted dictum of his : " The Romantic I call the sick ; the Classic the healthy " was no unconditional truth in the ageing poet's outlook on either life or art. There are visible traces of Romantic doctrine in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* ; and *Faust* itself closes with an apotheosis which might well have been inspired by a Romantic catholicism.

To the intimates of Goethe's last years belonged the immediate entourage of his "house friends" and his helpers in the ordering and arranging of his collected works.

These men, the Chancellor von Müller, the French tutor of the new duke, Soret, Goethe's secretaries Riemer and Eckermann, have all left intimate personal records of their intercourse with him. Goethe's conversations, notably those with Eckermann, which are the most voluminous and varied, are, for the modern reader, among the most attractive of Goethe's "works." Eckermann is a strange figure in Goethe's life. He came to Weimar in 1823 with the recommendation of having written a book which contained a sympathetic appreciation of Goethe's genius. It is difficult to think that Goethe could have been much impressed by his visitor's personality ; but he rightly gauged his devotion and took advantage of that strain of vanity in him which displays itself unpleasantly in the published conversations in an unwillingness to put himself in an unfavourable light and his childish efforts always to identify himself with his master's opinions. Whatever Eckermann was, he was no Boswell, and the veracity of his records is not always above criticism. Goethe not merely talked to the young man for the benefit of posterity ; he also shrewdly saw that he could make use of him. With a somewhat ruthless disregard of such chances as Eckermann had of making an independent career, Goethe chained him to his side, entrusting him with the main business of preparing the final edition of his works for after generations.

This edition "letzter Hand" was Goethe's main pre-occupation in these last years : the final "summing up of his existence." All the old man's activities, even the letters he wrote and the conversations he held, seemed directed to this end, the rounding-off of his life. The years meanwhile were growing somber as the end approached : and in 1830 the heaviest blow of all fell on him, the death

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of his worthless son—virtually a drunkard's death—and by a supreme touch of irony, in that Rome which had once been for his father the portal to a higher life. But Goethe, his own end necessarily not far distant, was steeled against even the worst buffets of fate. He would not speak of August's death, or have it spoken of, and to Zelter he concentrated his attitude to life in the grim words: "Forward over graves!" But in the months following his bereavement he drew nearer to Ottilie and the grandchildren; they were his last resource in his loneliness. During the dark days of 1830 he took in hand the final volume of his Autobiography, which had been held back as long as Lili, its central figure, lived. In that year she died, and he rapidly dictated the work to its close, that it might complete the picture of his pre-Weimar life.

Still two works remained to be finished and in incorporated in the great edition: *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, of which a first volume had appeared in 1821, and the Second Part of *Faust*. The *Wanderjahre* can hardly be described as a continuation of the *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* of more than thirty years before. The plan to write a continuation had, no doubt, been present in Goethe's mind from the first; he had mentioned it to Schiller in 1795; and indeed, it is tacitly implied in his original title: a man's apprenticeship can hardly be the essence of his life-story. But when Goethe came to take up the task in earnest, it proved beyond his powers—or indeed beyond any powers—to accomplish. *Faust*, moving symbolically in a world of ideas, less realistically bound to time and place, could be adapted to the changing horizons of the new century; but a novel of essentially realistic content, framed in the social milieu of the pre-

Revolutionary epoch, dealing with pre-Revolutionary ideas, could only with the greatest difficulty be adapted to the new era of industry and steam. Goethe was soon convinced that the problems with which the nineteenth century was faced could not be solved by masonic formulas ; the whole framework of the *Lehrjahre* had to be discarded. Moreover, even if the old plan could have been retained, Goethe himself no longer saw life with the eyes of 1796, when the cultivation of the beautiful seemed to him the natural threshold across which man passed into a higher life devoted to the service of humanity. But that idealism belonged to the far-off days of his friendship with Schiller, and had lost its savour for him now ; the problem of the " education of mankind " had ceased to be a simple progress for him, through the beautiful to the good ; rather now does true culture seem to him in a shadowy way a passing from the useful through the true to the beautiful. Thus he makes hardly any effort at all to link up the new book with the old ; even when the characters of the *Lehrjahre* reappear, they reappear only in name—and not always even that ; their lives take on quite different forms.

When the new work opens we find Wilhelm Meister, accompanied by his son Felix, on his " Wanderjahre," and under vows which impose constant movement on him : no longer than three days may he rest in any one place. In the Alps he comes upon a family which is a kind of replica of the Holy Family of the Gospel story ; it is almost, indeed, as if Wilhelm had made a journey back through time such as Faust makes to ancient Greece. What cryptic thoughts Goethe may have harboured here it is impossible to fathom. He then meets again Jarno in a new disguise, this time amongst the mines, as Montan ;

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and here Felix finds in a basalt cavern a mysterious casket, a kind of Pandora's box, the contents of which seem to be symbolic of life itself. These incidents and motives are, however, left hanging in the air ; their possibilities are unexplored and undeveloped ; and any attempt the poet makes later in his book, to link back to them, are artificial and unconvincing ; he does not succeed in preserving even a semblance of homogeneity. Wilhelm has to learn the lesson of "renunciation"—the second title of the book is *Die Entsagenden*—quite regardless of the fact that his learning of that lesson was the essential ethical contents of the *Lehrjahre*. He now resolves to be a surgeon, surely the strangest of metamorphoses in one who had set out in life with the purpose of giving his people a national theatre ! But neither his training for his new profession, nor his subsequent practice of it is anything more than an unsubstantial symbolic thought ; never for a moment does Goethe attempt to visualise them as concrete happenings in his hero's life. In the castle of the Uncle, who had appeared towards the end of the *Lehrjahre*, and in that of his niece, Makarie, we are introduced to still more etherialised and shadowy personifications of life-philosophies. Old characters are brought back from the *Lehrjahre* ; but this only serves to emphasise how completely Goethe's once great art had melted away into the thin air of abstraction and allegory. The problem of Felix's education does, however, give occasion for a refreshing glimpse into a world more concretely conceived than that of most of the book. The "pedagogic province" provides Goethe with a setting for a utopian dream of education, his final contribution to the problem, which, from Lessing and Rousseau to Pestalozzi, had engaged the best minds of the later eighteenth century.

Were this all that the *Wanderjahre* contains, it would have long been relegated to the lumber of unreadable books of the past. But apart from its negligible story, it contains a host of strange, irrelevant and arresting things ; and it is these irrelevancies that make it still worth while to turn to it now. It is in fact a receptacle into which Goethe threw the most varied collection of odds and ends of his work and thought. Separate stories, written at different periods of Goethe's life, are awkwardly and artificially fitted into the structure—stories for the presence of which there is no cogent reason except the poet's difficulty in providing enough matter for the two volumes the work had to fill. The reader is not, however, likely to resent their intrusion, for some of them are fresh enough to relieve the artistic barrenness of the main theme. Above all, the novel, in proportion as it has ceased to be a novel, has become a storehouse of Goethe's apophthegmatic wisdom in the last years of his life. There is no other book in which he has dwelt so explicitly on questions of religion, education, social organisation ; there is ripe wisdom behind all his utterances on these matters, even if he too often indulges in a utopianism, which loses the firm earth underfoot. Of all the thoughts of the *Wanderjahre* none has left a deeper impression on the minds of posterity than that of the three Reverences, "The Reverence for what is above us, for what is beneath us, and what is in us, which in their union produce what may truly be called the true religion." It was the final crystallisation of Goethe's thought on the relation of man to the unseen. The most significant thing about the book is, in the end, that Goethe has here succeeded in dissociating himself in large measure from his old eighteenth-century self ; it is a tribute to the progressive and adaptable nature of his

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intellect, his ability to reason wisely—and very few men whose best years lay in the era before the great Revolution have this ability—on the problems of the nineteenth century, the changes brought about in the social fabric by steam and industrialism, and the new horizons opened up by the advance of science. I sometimes think that we can even catch a glimpse here of an understanding for that new orientation of the world, to which Goethe's mind seemed always most impervious, the coming of democracy. Thus, if *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* is the most lamentable of Goethe's failures as a creative artist, it is one of the richest of his books in contemplative wisdom. It is, indeed, a kind of supplement to the Second Part of *Faust*; for much that is there set forth poetically and symbolically finds in the philosophy of the *Wanderjahre* its justification and explanation.

It has always been regarded as an especial favour granted to Goethe by the Higher Powers that he was permitted, before he closed his eyes, to put the finishing touches to his life-work, *Faust*. The poem was completed within a month of two of his death; and he went on revising it and filing it almost to the last. It is difficult to say exactly when the idea of a Second Part took definite shape in Goethe's mind. The association of Faust with Helen of Troy was, of course, a very old motive in the saga; and Goethe could not but have considered from the beginning how she might be introduced into his drama. But at no stage was there room for her in the First Part. The necessity of a continuation must have risen definitely into Goethe's consciousness as soon as the poem was provided with a new cosmic framework by the Prologue in Heaven and the pact between Faust and Mephistopheles. This happened in the last years of the eighteenth century;

and as early as 1816 the plan of the Second Part was committed to paper in considerable detail. All through his nineteenth-century life Goethe worked fitfully at it, but in no regular sequence. The third or Helena act was completed first, and even published separately in 1827 ; while the final touches concerned, not the fifth act, but the particularly recalcitrant fourth act.

The basic idea of the Second Part is that the Faust who, in the First Part, had been shown struggling tragically with an adverse fate within the narrow sphere of his personal life, should in the Second Part be led out into the great world of political and social action. It was obvious—and it must have been clear to Goethe at a very early stage of his plan—that the poetic method of the First Part was quite inapplicable to the Second. Faust, idealised and generalised as the representative of aspiring humanity, moving in a sphere of most manifold activities, could only be presented symbolically and allegorically. At the same time, Goethe's earliest plan of the Second Part does not betoken quite so unrealistic a handling of Faust's personality and actions as Goethe ultimately adopted. Little realistic details in the plan of 1816—mostly eliminated in the poetic handling—still maintained a connecting thread with history and reality. It is here, for instance, no abstract, typical emperor at whose court Faust is entertained, but quite definitely, Maximilian I. ; and many of the scenes are conceived in the spirit of the German fairy-tale rather than in that of classical allegory. The truth is, the growing tendency of Goethe's ageing imagination to express itself in abstractions was a more compelling factor in his change of method than the poetic requirements of the theme. Faust and Mephistopheles, in other words, underwent the same dehumanising process

to which Wilhelm Meister and his circle had been subjected ; the shadow took the place of the substance.

Faust's recovery, under the healing power of nature, from the tragic happenings with which Part I had closed, is symbolically set forth at the beginning of the Second Part in a kind of prologue, which culminates in the splendid monologue, setting the key of the new poem :

“ Des Lebens Pulse schlägen frisch lebendig,
Aetherische Dämmerung milde zu begrüßen ;
Du, Erde, warst auch diese Nacht beständig
Und atmest neu erquickt zu meinen Füßen,
Beginnest schon mit Lust mich zu umgeben,
Du regst und rührst ein kräftiges Beschliessen,
Zum höchsten Dasein immerfort zu streben.”

Faust's resolve to strive towards the “ höchste Dasein ” the highest life in a world which is only made manifest to us in its “ farbigen Abglanz,” its coloured reflection—this is the basis of the Second Part of the poem.

In Act I we find Faust at the court of the Emperor. Here with the aid of Mephistopheles, who throughout the poem cloaks himself in many disguises, whereby is concealed that antagonism to the good in him which Goethe would fain have eliminated entirely, Faust helps to amuse the court. He organises an elaborate “ Mummenschanz ” or masquerade, whose allegory makes little enough appeal to the modern reader, and, when the imperial treasury is depleted, he provides new riches in the form of paper money. These court scenes provide—as they had done in the legend—the occasion for linking up Faust's life with Helen of Troy. To entertain the emperor Faust undertakes to conjure up before him the shade of the Greek beauty. He calls Mephistopheles to his

aid. The latter cannot give effect to his wish, the heathen world of antiquity being outside his sphere, but instructs him how with the aid of the mysterious "mothers," keepers of the Platonic ideals of realities, he may bring back Helena's shade from the dark land of Persephone. This Faust achieves, and he is seized with such violent love of the shadow that he cannot rest until that shadow has become substance for him. Mephistopheles brings him again to the old familiar Gothic room where his poetic life had begun. Here Wagner has stepped into his master's shoes, and the former student who had timidly consulted Mephistopheles, thinking he was Faust, about his studies, has profited by the devil's counsels and developed into a boisterous philistine. Wagner is engaged in that most ambitious of all the experiments of medieval alchemy, the creation of life. As Mephistopheles arrives the result is achieved ; a small living being, a "Homunculus" takes shape in his retort. And now this extraordinary trio, Faust, Mephistopheles and the Homunculus, set out on a journey back through time to the Greece of Helena. The most Romantic of Romantic poets never conceived anything so fantastic as this Odyssey into the past, Faust on the quest of the supreme beauty of the world, and the little Homunculus in search of the soul which the art of the alchemist could not give him. In Greece they arrive to witness a "classical Walpurgisnacht" which gave Goethe's luxuriant imagination an opportunity of awakening to poetic life the underworld of ancient Greece. Here indeed the sensitive reader of the Second *Faust* begins to feel again the compelling power of the poet's genius ; the grey veil of allegory becomes more tenuous, and the beauty of the ancient world more real. The final apotheosis of this Walpurgisnacht, where

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Galatea rises resplendent from the sea, and the Homunculus fulfils his spiritual realisation in shattering himself against her chariot, is one of Goethe's most spacious imaginings. And now against the background of this revival of antiquity play out the personal fates of Faust and Helena. The classical Goethe has written nothing more stately and serene than the Helena act of *Faust*; and if the idyllic love of Faust and Helena is quickened by an unclassical emotionalism, I cannot help thinking, as I have already indicated, that Byron deserves some credit for it. Byron's ardent philhellenism infused life and warmth into the marble-cold Greece of the eighteenth-century tradition, with which Goethe had grown up. It was thus only fitting that in Euphorion, the child of Faust and Helena, Goethe should have raised a monument to the poet whom he regarded as the most gifted of his contemporaries. For behind these scenes there is again a great allegory: in the northern Germanic Faust and the classic Helena Goethe symbolises the antithesis of Romantic and Classic which dominated literature in the early years of the nineteenth century; by their union in Arcady his conciliatory mind sought to eliminate the antagonism. Now it was just Byron's mission, as Goethe conceived it, to bring about the reconciliation in modern poetry. In justifying his Euphorion allegory to Eckermann he said: "I could use no one as the representative of the most modern poetic era but Byron, who is, without question, to be regarded as the greatest talent of the century. And then Byron is not antique, and not romantic; but he is as the present day itself."

The fourth act of the Second Part of *Faust*, with its crowded allegory of great world happenings, of war and strife, again fails signally to grip our interest. Here,

indeed, is the weakest part of the poem ; but had Goethe not attempted the impossible ? In his fifth act, however, with its grandiose Dantesque close, Goethe again displays his old strength. Once more, and for the last time, he has here given the world a personal "confession." In describing this aged Faust who has "run through" life unsatisfied, and now, his great task accomplished, faces his earthly death, Goethe is writing out of his own unconquerable heart. He, too, like his Faust in these scenes, had been haunted by remorse for wrongs inflicted and deeds undone ; he, too, in the end had been assailed by grey women, and blinded by Care. As strenuously as his hero, Goethe fought to live—to live "in Aeonien" ; but for him, too, he knew, grinning lemurs would dig the grave. The noble monologues with which Faust closes his earthly life are as personal poetry as Goethe ever wrote :

" Ich bin nur durch die Welt gerannt ;
 Ein jed' Gelüst ergriff ich bei den Haaren,
 Was nicht genügte, liess ich fahren,
 Was mir entwischte liess ich ziehn.
 Ich habe nur begehrt und nur vollbracht,
 Und abermals gewünscht und so mit Macht
 Mein Leben durchgestürmt ; erst gross und mächtig ;
 Nun aber geht es weise, geht bedächtig.
 Der Erdenkreis ist mir genug bekannt.
 Nach drüben ist die Aussicht uns verrannt ;
 Tor, wer dorthin die Augen blinzeln richtet,
 Sich über Wolken seinesgleichen dichtet !
 Er stehe fest und siehe hier sich um ;
 Dem Tüchtigen ist diese Welt nicht stumm.
 Was braucht er in die Ewigkeit zu schweifen !
 Was er erkennt, lässt sich ergreifen,

Er wandle so den Erdentag entlang ;
 Wenn Geister spuken, geh' er seinen Gang,
 Im Weiterschreiten find' er Qual und Glück,
 Er, unbefriedigt jeden Augenblick ! ”

And :

“ Ja! diesem Sinne bin ich ganz ergeben,
 Das ist der Weisheit letzter Schluss :
 Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben,
 Der täglich sie erobern muss.
 Und so verbringt, umrungen von Gefahr,
 Hier Kindheit, Mann und Greis sein tüchtig Jahr.
 Solch ein Gewimmel möcht' ich sehn,
 Auf freiem Grund mit freiem Volke stehn.
 Zum Augenblicke dürft' ich sagen :
 Verweile doch, du bist so schön !
 Es kann die Spur von meinen Erdetagen
 Nicht in Aeonen untergehn.—
 Im Vorgefühl von solchem hohen Glück
 Geniess' ich jetzt den höchsten Augenblick.”

Much has been written about the defeat of the ends of justice by Goethe's salvation of Faust. There is, of course, no denying that Mephistopheles is unjustly cheated out of the fruits of the wager he has won, when Faust at last admits that the moment has come when he can bid the passing moment stay. Faust escapes only by virtue of the old poet's optimistic caveat : the good cannot and must not perish ; and indeed, that had been proclaimed in no uncertain terms by God Himself in the Prologue in Heaven. One might have preferred that other ending which Goethe is credited with having once contemplated, a scene where God should pardon both Mephistopheles and His erring servant Faust, and

all have ended in beatified conciliation. But one thing is plain : an ending other than conciliatory was to Goethe's mind unthinkable. God cannot and will not let His servant fall ; and he sends His angels—in a scene which made a peculiar appeal to Ruskin—to scatter roses, thus discomfiting and defeating the powers of evil. Evil ? But what is evil ? Can evil have any substance at all in God's world ? To Goethe evil is but the stepping-stone to the good, as Mephistopheles is the servant of God. And who actually is this Mephistopheles ? In early robust days he had been a very conventional and very human devil ; then he came to be a kind of elemental spirit, an emissary of the Spirit of the Earth ; then one of God's heavenly hierarchy. Last of all, he is sublimated into an abstraction, who assumes at will the guises of heathen antiquity. With each successive transformation he becomes a paler effigy of his former self ; more and more the allegorical embodiment of an idea. But as the great drama closes, all guises are suddenly, as it were, stripped from him, and he seems to stand out as the arch-enemy of man—Time itself. Not evil is the great antagonist in *Faust*, but all-conquering Time. "The clock stands still ; the pointer falls."

In the final apotheosis of his poem Goethe, the "great heathen," has, it is often said, become a convert to the Romantic Catholic faith. The angels, "bearing the immortal part of Faust," rise ever higher through a spiritual world as purely Catholic as that of any medieval mystery. But might it not be fairer to say that this close, so far from representing doctrinary narrowness, is a tribute to the old poet's wideness—in the best sense catholicism—of soul ? In these last years so many of the antitheses that had accompanied Goethe through life were resolved

into harmony : there is no antagonism for him now between Protestantism and Catholicism, between Christianity and heathendom, between Greek and German, between classic and romantic ; just as in his own self the two souls that had fought for supremacy were at rest. Least of all is there apostasy in this German Faust, who had passed through the purgatory of suffering and renunciation, who had dwelt in Arcady with Helen, when he at last ascends through saints and angels guided by the Eros who had initiated him into life, led by “ Una Poenitentium, formerly called Gretchen,” to the feet of the Divine Mother in whom the heavenly and the earthly love are one and indivisible.

The last act of *Faust* is a fit allegorical close to a great allegorical life ; in its final words the symbol is resolved into perfect harmony.

“ Alles Vergängliche
Ist nur ein Gleichnis ;
Das Unzulängliche,
Hier wird's Ereignis ;
Das Unbeschreibliche,
Hier ist's getan ;
Das Ewig-Weibliche
Zieht uns hinan.”

This *Faust* is then a tremendous effort to harmonise the world, the most wonderful, perhaps in all literature ; the last great achievement of one whose mission all through his years was, rightly regarded, to bring harmony and peace into a troubled world. But it is admittedly difficult for us moderns to acquire the right focus for its complete appreciation. The Second Part of *Faust* suffers, as a work of creative genius, and must always suffer in comparison

with the intensely human First Part. It is a poem of shadowy, schematic personalities, bandying shadowy and allegorical thoughts. Faust himself has been sublimated into a symbol ; Mephistopheles has become an abstraction; in neither does any more the blood run red. Helena, too, is but a shadow ; never could this Helena, this symbol of supreme beauty, have "launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium." There is indeed no human interest at all in this Second Part ; its actions are not human actions subject to human motives, but allegorical happenings in a world of fantasies, of classic phantoms and symbols. And yet, frankly accepting it as allegory, what a world it is, this world of the Second *Faust* ! Can a more resplendent panorama be found anywhere in the literature of the world ?

On March 22nd, 1832, after a comparatively short illness, Goethe closed his eyes for ever. Older biographers liked to dwell on the tradition that the old poet's last words were "more light." A cruel exactness has whittled down this poetic close to a great life into a request of the dying man that the blinds might be raised. But the symbolical application of the words remains : all his life Goethe had sought untiringly for "more light" on the riddle of the world ; and he, like his Faust, passed out with his craving unsatisfied and the mystery unsolved.

In the next, concluding chapter, I have endeavoured to say something of what Goethe means or may mean to our modern world. But here at the close of his life, it seems fitting to look back once more on the wide span of years it covered. Goethe's life is not merely a life ; it is an epoch. It covers the whole vast development of Germany's rich literature—its golden age—in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. That life

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began in rococo Leipzig, when the new literature was in its infancy, passed through its stormy adolescence of Rousseauism, to attain its maturity in the humane classicism we associate with Weimar. More than this, Goethe lived through the first third of the new century ; he was a contemporary of the whole vast development of Romanticism on which the new century was reared ; and when he died, that Romanticism had already, as far as his own people were concerned, become a turned page. Thus Goethe is—and it can be said of no other of his contemporaries with the same force—a denizen of two centuries. This is the highest tribute that can be paid to the breadth of his mind and sympathies, and to his marvellous power of spiritual development.

Chapter Twelve

CONCLUSION

The task of compressing within a brief survey the rich and multiform life of Germany's greatest poet has been wellnigh insuperable. Much, very much, has remained unsaid ; and in what has been said, my choice has, I dare say, often been dictated by personal rather than universally valid motives ; or, at best, influenced by what seemed to me to be the interest of our twentieth century. These are defects which are difficult to avoid in a little biography. But I cannot leave Goethe without attempting to grapple with the chief problem of all : what does Goethe mean to us to-day ? Every new generation in the past hundred years has felt the need of defining its attitude to Goethe ; and the history of his fame has been a succession of varying attitudes towards him, a probing and questioning on the part of his readers as to whether he means the same thing to them as he did to their fathers.

Let us forget for a space the criticism of abstract or absolute aesthetic values ; let us leave the historian, who comes armed with his trained critical sense and his historic perspective, to establish Goethe in his particular niche in the Valhalla of poetry ; and let us ask the blunt personal question : Do we still feel Goethe to be a poet of the present ? How far is he still able to move us with his visions of poetic beauty ? How far has he the power to add to our spiritual stature, to be a guide and a teacher to us ? May we still turn to him in the twentieth century,

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as men like Carlyle turned to him a hundred years ago, in our doubts and perplexities, find in him a comforter and consoler in dark days?

The question of the living power of a great poet of the past is, of course, not the same thing as that of his literary achievement and eminence. We all recognise the greatness of Homer and Virgil, of Dante and Cervantes, of Shakespeare; and we do seek refuge with them, as in a kind of Golden Age, from the trouble and the fret of our modern life; but it is rare that they can afford us a solution to immediate spiritual perplexities. They may fill our minds with visions of pure beauty and sublime imaginings; but when it is a question of the intimate difficulties that beset us, these great writers of a remote past have little to say to us. They are too far away, too much denizens of other worlds than ours, to give us what our souls need and crave for. Does Goethe, whose life lies nearer to our own time, also stand nearer to us, near enough to be a living guide to us?

It is perhaps a proof of Goethe's essential "liveness" that we have not yet reached objective finality in our judgment of him; that we still cannot speak dispassionately of him. He is an object of reverence, and even passionate reverence, to some, while by others he is repudiated and scorned. We are still in the stage of debating about him; and thinking men in all lands feel the necessity of putting to themselves the question: Was Goethe really so great a poet as we are told he was? Is he still great? Wherein lies his claim to greatness? This need of re-estimating Goethe, of constantly revising our judgment of him, is, I think, a hopeful sign. As long as this is our attitude to a writer of the past, he has assuredly not ceased to be a living force in our intellectual life.

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If we pass in review the opinion which men of critical leading in the past have held about Goethe, we meet with a very wide range of opinion. Amongst ourselves, we have Carlyle's fervid Romantic interpretation of him and his earnest appeal : " Close thy Byron, open thy Goethe ! " balanced by the irreverent attitude of minds like De Quincey's ; we have George Henry Lewes's still fascinating biography ; and the sane and balanced estimates—tinged, it is true, with the Victorian passion for ethical ideals—of men like Matthew Arnold, John Seeley, Edward Dowden. Again, we cannot neglect to take note of the steadfast loyalty to him of his own people during the last forty years. Indeed, at no time in the history of German intellectual life—not even in the wild years of fermentation when, with such splendid munificence, Goethe flung out the masterpieces of his youth into the " seed-field of time "—has he been held in such high esteem in his own land as during the last generation. The celebration of the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his birth in 1899—to the present writer still a vivid memory—formed an extraordinary contrast to the lukewarm celebration of 1849, when the esteem in which Goethe was held was at its lowest ebb. The year 1899, no doubt, brought his fame in Germany to a kind of culmination. Down to the Great War this enthusiasm showed no signs of abatement ; and if I have gauged rightly the abundant literature on him which has appeared since 1914, it would seem as if Goethe, the spiritual leader of his people in their prosperity, were a no less trusted leader to them in their adversity.

Goethe has left us much poetry of the highest order of beauty ; but I venture to think that no other of the great minds of our race has left behind him so many failures ;

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so much that falls disappointingly short of the highest achievement. As the years move on, the number of Goethe's creations that are acknowledged to be irreproachably great seems to diminish. It is not always easy to stand up to traditional opinion and be absolutely honest in our attitude to his work ; but I think we must frankly admit that in the brief hundred years that have passed since Goethe closed his eyes in Weimar, his works have not enjoyed the hoped-for immunity from the ravages of the time-spirit ; in this respect he has been surpassed by many less gifted and less universal European writers than he. Only a very small proportion of all the hundred and fifty volumes that now comprise his collected literary remains, bear upon them the stamp of eternity. Indeed, it might be questioned whether there is more than one sphere of imaginative creation in which Goethe achieves sustained and matchless greatness, the sphere of the lyric, regarding that sphere as embracing all the many wonderful shorter poems strewn through his works. Apart from these, we have the great world-drama of *Faust* ; there are the two classic dramas *Iphigenie auf Tauris* and *Torquato Tasso*, the epic idyll of *Hermann und Dorothea* ; and I have, it will be remembered, put in a plea for that "life-book" of Goethe's youth, which is too readily scoffed at by our modern intellectuals as a maudlin love-story : *Werthers Leiden*. But in the field of the prose epic and in the medium of prose Goethe was always less successful than when he wrote in verse. Who could compare *Wilhelm Meister* as an imaginative creation—significant as it is in the evolution of German fiction—with our own splendid *Tom Jones* ? And the epic of his own youth, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* ? Again, is it not too often lumbering in its style and too tedious in its

leisurely irrelevancies to be an unmixed pleasure to the modern reader ?

Such, I think, is a fair statement of the twentieth-century attitude among ourselves to Goethe the creative artist. That so great a mind as his should have given us so few masterpieces beyond all reproach is, no doubt, partly accounted for by the fact that in his writings he was an incorrigible procrastinator. Had he possessed the perseverance and staying power which his friend Schiller showed in so high a degree, that determination to weld the iron while it still glowed, instead of constantly having to heat it up afresh ; had he wrestled with his "daimon" as Jacob with the angel, until he had found blessedness, he would certainly have left us more masterpieces which would be for us veritable "possessions for ever."

But there is perhaps another reason for the discrepancy between Goethe's genius and his creations ; and this reason is only dimly beginning to emerge in our time from the many disquisitions on the dualism or "polarity" of Goethe's nature. It was this dualism which gave Goethe that supreme balance of mind—a balance in which he has never been surpassed by any man—and made him so helpful and inspiring as a spiritual leader. But it seems to me very questionable whether such polarity is a gain to the artist. There is no disintegrating polarity of the Goethean type in Homer or Dante, in Sophocles or Shakespeare. In Goethe's breast were always two souls, and that not merely in the sense expressed by Faust in the often quoted lines :

"Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach, in meiner Brust,
Die eine will sich von der andern trennen ;
Die eine hält, in derber Liebeslust,

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Sich an die Welt mit klammernden Organen ;
Die andre hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dust
Zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen—”

but in every sense. If I understand aright the process of imaginative creation, its supreme achievement can only be attained in singleness of heart and soul ; to the artist with two conflicting souls in his breast it is rarely given to touch the very highest.

It was something of an admission of this disparity between Goethe's genius and his achievement when, at the revival of Goethe study and enthusiasm forty years ago, the parole went forth that greater than all his works was the life that Goethe lived ; his writings, we were told, should not be enjoyed and interpreted as art-works standing by themselves and justifying themselves, but rather as life documents, as “ fragments of a great confession.” That this view is now being discredited and a more objective attitude to Goethe's poetry insisted upon—Benedetto Croce's stimulating volume of some years ago was in this respect a clearing of the air—seems to me one of the significant advances of the Goethe criticism of our time. Real aesthetic values are quite independent of subjective interest ; a work of art must stand or fall by its own objective merit as such.

But the fact remains that Goethe's life—by far the most fully documented life in literary annals—is a very precious heritage to after-generations. May I look back on it once more in the shortened vista of a summary ? We saw how even the poet's youth, far back in the eighteenth century, has a freshness and fascination that seems as of yesterday. We still feel as Goethe felt ; no veil of time has descended between his way of looking at life and the

world and ours ; Goethe's youth still holds the mirror up to an ideal in us, an ideal of joy in life, in nature, in love. Then came the Weimar years, at first an immediate continuation of that early time of overflowing, ebullient genius ; Goethe—the Goethe of *Iphigenie*, *Egmont*, *Wilhelm Meisters Theatralische Sendung*—is still the directly inspired writer of genius, the “ maker ” and creator. But with the maturing years, as we have seen, a change came over him ; he ceased to be satisfied merely to obey the behests of his genius, and to give unthinkingly of his plenitude ; he became increasingly obsessed with the problems of his own life, his poetic mission, and responsibilities to his genius. Possibly, indeed probably, these problems were forced upon Goethe by dissatisfaction with the narrowness of his sphere in Weimar, which at first promised so much, and was subsequently to appear to him in the light of a constricting factor. At last in 1787 he wrenched himself free ; for a year and a half in Italy he was completely his own master. And then the prison-bars of German provinciality closed upon him once more, never to let him free again. Slowly but surely the pettiness of the old life ate into his soul ; and he who in Italy had discovered that he was “ really born for poetry,” ceased to be in the high sense a poet at all. The divine afflatus in great measure evaporated ; and the greatest spirit in Europe petrified into a German “ Geheimrat ”—pompous, magisterial, dictatorial. Goethe ceased to create—to create naively and imaginatively ; the artist in him mortified ; he became a mere shadow of the inspired, instinctive genius of early days. His prose became reflective, tediously informative, scientific, often merely vapid ; and his poetry became apophthegmatic and subtle, even when it dealt with lyric and emotional things. The

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light that shines on even so perfectly constructed a masterpiece as *Hermann und Dorothea*, is, alas ! a light reflected through prisms ; it is no longer the pure clear sunshine of heaven that floods the pages of *Werther* and the early masterpieces. It has flattered the German mind in the past that a poet—and one without noble blood in his veins—should have been lifted up into the spheres in which Goethe moved, have become the intimate of a reigning duke and his minister of state ; but we outsiders who are insensitive to the glamour of such patronage must be pardoned if we see it all from another angle. Was it not rather a tragedy that the mightiest poetic mind of his age should have been ground down in an obsequious activity so unnecessary and so unworthy ? And Goethe himself knew it and felt it.

But there are always compensations in the ways of God to man. In this period of artistic abdication Goethe grew mightily in wisdom ; no longer the inspired creator, he became the wisest of men, the exemplar and the prophet of his time. More self-reliant, more balanced, more confidence-inspiring that wisdom grew as his great life drew to a close. But like all the precious things in life, Goethe's balance of mind was no easy acquisition. He had his full share of the artist's sensitiveness ; he was handicapped all his life by a sensitiveness to the other sex, which, apart from the disturbance it brought into his own personal life, coloured and narrowed down the issues of his poetry. It prevented Goethe seeing the great ethical problems of history, when he dealt with these poetically, apart from narrow issues of personal emotion ; he was as little able as the great French tragic poets of the seventeenth century to eliminate the "love-interest," although it never appears in his work in quite so conventionally crude

a form. His great creations from *Götz* to *Faust* are trivialised—as our own Shakespeare's never are—by this dominating sex-complex. His whole long life was a persistent struggle with emotional cross-currents that threatened to dominate and thwart his genius ; but from this struggle he emerged stronger and more self-reliant ; he acquired freedom and balance. Goethe's attainment of life-wisdom was no blessing that dropped into his lap, but the issue of a long and bitter struggle. And this is what makes it precious to us. Not happiness, but sorrow, was the ultimate reward. We have seen how Goethe's life, in spite of a "success" such as few men of letters ever attain, went down in renunciation and loneliness ; and from this sorrow Goethe's life-wisdom rose great and pure. As to his own *Faust*, the night only brought greater clearness :

“ Die Nacht scheint tiefer tief hereinzudringen,
Allein im Innern leuchtet helles Licht.”

That “*Entsagung*” which, in early days, had been but a purple fringe on the bright garment of life, became its main texture, and Goethe entered into the “Sanctuary of Sorrow.”

Thus if I am to attempt to define what makes Goethe an asset to our modern life, I should not seek it in the artistic qualities of his work as a whole, or any individual work, but in his personality, his universality and balance. That very polarity, which was so disturbing a factor in his work as an artist only added to the completeness as a man, as the artist of his own life. This it was that “so mixed the elements in him that Nature might stand up and say to all the world : this was a man.” There is no greater optimist in the world's literature than Goethe ; and the

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significance of his optimism lay in the fact that it was no mere satisfaction that life had treated him kindly. Rather had he wrestled with the dark powers through "kummervolle Nächte," through nights of tears, wrestled with them and defied them. Like his Scottish disciple, Carlyle, he had attained the "Everlasting Yea" only after passing through the Valley of the Shadow, the "Everlasting No." Goethe learned slowly and in constant struggle to see life steadily and see it whole, learned to believe in the goodness of the world. To him the words of *Genesis* said all that was to be said : "And God saw everything, and behold it was very good."

The great problem of evil, which men have tormented themselves with since the world began, lost all its terrors in the radiant confidence of this optimism. Goethe stood before it as the little children in Maeterlinck's *Oiseau bleu* before the mystery of death : "There *is* no death !" For Goethe there is no evil ; there can be no evil, for God's world is good. What we with our limited understandings call evil is but a darker thread in the weft of life ; something that is only the good in disguise, that we are unable to penetrate. Evil is the servant of the good, as Mephistopheles is the servant of God. What else, indeed, is the ultimate teaching of *Faust* ?

It is in this buoyant faith in the goodness of the world that Goethe, this great artist of life, envisaged the problem of human endeavour. No man ever spoke wiser words to the perplexed seeker after a right interpretation of his individual problems than he. The first demand made upon every man is that he make the utmost of the gift of life. Learn the meaning of the "know thyself" of the wise ancients, or, as Carlyle bluntly interpreted it : "Know what thou canst work at !" And once thy

sphere of activity is clear devote thyself to it with all thy might—not in overleaping ambition, but in wise limitation ; for “in der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister.” In steady, unabated effort lies salvation. Once man lets this zeal—the “holy earnestness” of *Wilhelm Meister*—flag ; the moment he is tempted to say to the passing moment : “Stay, thou art so fair !” he is lost. Our Victorian moralists used to look askance at this life-philosophy of Goethe as something unworthy and selfish, as mere egoism. But they had forgotten the wise reminder of the poet that every man must be an egoist if he will not become one. And wherein lies the highest activity of man ? Assuredly not in egoistic self-culture, but rather in race-service. Such is the goal to which Faust ultimately attains. Goethe’s altruism is no mere concrete philanthropy, but an altruism in the interests of the great entity of humanity, the service of renunciation in the furtherance of the race.

I have somewhere described Goethe’s optimism as a fatalistic optimism ; I still think it is the right description of it. We cannot close our eyes to the darker side of it which the word fatalistic suggests. Goethe’s belief in the ultimate rightness of all happenings—whether they may appear to our limited minds as good or evil—led him gently, but inevitably on to the path of fatalism. He accepted life, as he counsels us to accept life, as it comes ; not to revolt against it, or to rebel. He saw how some men were born to dark unhappy fates ; others to success and glory. To the former his advice is to bear with fortitude, without complaint or regret, the life-burden put upon their shoulders ; to the latter to fulfil the duties that are ascribed to them without exultation or pride. Even when supreme geniuses like Raphael, Mozart and

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Byron, are cut off in their prime before their work is accomplished, Goethe still sees in it a wise ordinance of Providence, whereby "something is still left to be done in a world that is calculated to last a long time." We must look upon life, not from the narrow window of our ego, but from the wide standpoint of human solidarity and human progress. Every man has his "God-given hest," and that "God-given hest" must be fulfilled, for good or for evil ; for it belongs to the divine scheme of the world ; to the genius, temperament, aspiration and desires which are not really ours, but the results of mysterious, inexplicable laws of inheritance. Goethe accepted the world as the fulfilment of infinite wisdom, manifesting itself in an endless chain of cause and effect. We can only "wait" in patience, "abwarten"—a little word that was very often on his lips in his last years—steadfastly fulfil, according to our lights, our share in the world scheme. Goethe's optimistic faith did not escape the danger to which all optimism is exposed, the tendency to lapse into determinism.

We cannot thus close our eyes to the limiting consequences which Goethe's optimism brought with it. We see it even in little things, in the conduct of his own life. He may have given a wise and philosophic justification of his doctrine of evil ; but it led him to refuse to countenance manifestly evil things, to attempt to avoid them. This is apparent in Goethe's reluctance to face suffering, his abhorrence of asceticism and death. And it is reflected in his poetry. Think how, once the period of transcendent genius in Goethe's life was over, he sedulously avoided tragedy ! *Egmont* is, in spirit, no tragedy ; *Iphigenie* had in it elements of tragedy which Goethe passed by ; and who but this inveterate optimist would

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have called the unhappy Tasso back from the shades, and refuse to show us the unfathomable tragic pity and fear that his life evokes? The "Storm and Stress" *Faust* was tragic; indeed, nothing could be more intensely tragic; but all the later development of the poem was, as we have seen, calculated to soften and erase its tragic effect. And I am not sure whether, after all, this "Divine Comedy" of the modern world would not have left a deeper mark on the minds of men, had *Faust* ended in the grip of Mephistopheles, than kneeling, redeemed by the "woman soul," beatified at the feet of the Virgin. Surely, the highest literature of the world is always tragic. But no! Goethe said: God's world is good. The good must triumph. There is no evil!

Thus there are serious limitations to Goethe's optimistic wisdom. We have frankly to recognise in it the wisdom of an age, the age of which Goethe was the great completer and perfecter. His was the last and highest word in the progress of eighteenth-century thought—the end, as Leibnitz had been the beginning; he had put the crown on that splendid ideal of the "education of mankind" which had occupied the century's noblest minds. His ultimate mission to his age was, we might say, to bring harmony into a Europe whose optimism had suffered many a buffet from the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 to the French Revolution and Napoleon. But there came a time, not long after Goethe closed his eyes, when new problems arose which Goethe's philosophy was powerless to solve. In his wise foresight he anticipated much; but what he did not foresee was the wave of withering pessimism that swept over Europe towards the middle of the nineteenth century. Here renunciation, "Entsagung," on which Goethe's own life-wisdom had been reared took on another

form which his optimism was but ill equipped to meet. And as time has gone on, other developments have supervened, not dreamt of in Goethe's philosophy. The old problem of good and evil has taken on new and terrible forms, which make us feel that, after all, "der Weisheit letzter Schluss" has no finality, but like the horizon moves always onward in front of the wanderer.

Even for our twentieth century, which looks back on the previous century's pessimism as a night that has passed, can one say that Goethe's ripe wisdom is likely to appeal, or, indeed, should appeal, to young ardent souls looking forward into life? It may be consoling to the weary, the storm-tossed, the unfortunate to be told: Heaven is closed for us; earth's narrow circle is all that is ours; let us make the best of it; let us frame our lives and our activities so that we may bring the best that is in us to fruition within these limitations. But to those who are facing life actively may this not seem only quietism, only an evasion of responsibilities? Goethe's philosophy is no philosophy for the rebel, the pioneer into the unknown, the adventurer on uncharted seas. And it is only by daring greatly, by rebelling, that the world moves forward. Nor is his wisdom a consolation to the defiant soul that goes down in tragedy before the life-mystery; for Goethe had nothing in him of the stuff of which martyrs are made; he could not envisage life tragically. But after all, it is not the ripe conclusions of his wisdom that we have to learn from him. Optimism may be the ultimate consummation of wisdom; but ready-made optimism benefits no one, or, indeed, theories of any kind for the conduct of life. We have ourselves to fight out our own salvation; to acquire our own wisdom; we must, in Goethe's own words, "daily conquer our life anew." His example

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teaches us how he grappled with his own problem ; and how he fought through to that spiritual balance and that " inner freedom " which is the most precious thing in life. Thus, in the end, it is not Goethe's optimism by which his value for us moderns is to be gauged ; but the example that lies open to us in his works, of how he, opposed and disillusioned by " earth-spirits," wrestled with them and overthrew them, ultimately attaining to peace and harmony. Goethe's greatest lesson is how to live so that our life-wisdom be justified of itself.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF WORKS

	Written	First Published
I.—1765-75		
Poetische Gedanken über die Höllen- fahrt Jesu Christi	1765	1766
Annette	1767	1897
Die Laune des Verliebten. Ein Schäferspiel	1767-68	1806
Neue Lieder in Melodien gesetzt	1767-69	1769
Die Mitschuldigen. Ein Lustspiel	1768-69	1787
Sesenheimer Lieder and Volkslieder	1770-71	1775-89 and later
Zum Schäkesspears Tag	1771	1854
Geschichte Gottfriedens von Ber- lichingen, dramatisiert	1771-72	1833
Von deutscher Baukunst	1772	1772
Briefe des Pastors zu ***; Zwo wich- tige biblische Fragen	1772	1773
Contributions to the Frankfurter Gelehrte Anzeigen	1772-73	1772-73
Götz von Berlichingen. Ein Schau- spiel	1773	1773
Jahrmarktsfest zu Plundersweilern. Ein Schönbartspiel	1773	1774
Ein Fastnachtsspiel vom Pater Brey	1773	1774
Satyros, oder der vergötterte Wald- teufel. Drama	1773	1817
Prometheus. Drama (fragment)	1773	1830
Des Künstlers Erdewallen. Drama	1773	1774
Götter, Helden und Wieland. Eine Farce	1773	1774
Der ewige Jude (fragment of an epic)	1774	1836
Des Künstlers Apotheose. Drama	1774	1879
Clavigo. Ein Trauerspiel	1774	1774
Die Leiden des jungen Werthers	1773-74	1774
Erwin und Elmire. Ein Schauspiel mit Gesang	1773-74	1775
Gedichte an Lili Schönemann	1775	1775 and later

LIST OF WORKS

Stella. Ein Schauspiel für Liebende	1775	1776
Claudine von Villa Bella. Ein Schauspiel mit Gesang	1774-75	1776
Hanswursts Hochzeit, oder der Lauf der Welt. Drama	1775	1836
Faust, in its earliest form (Urfaust)	1773-75	1887

II.—1776-90

Hans Sachsens Poetische Sendung	1776	1776
Die Geschwister. Ein Schauspiel	1776	1787
Lila. Ein Schauspiel mit Gesang	1777	1790
Harzreise im Winter	1777	1789
Der Triumph der Empfindsamkeit (incl. Prosperina). Eine dramatische Grille	1777-78	1787
An den Mond	1778	1789
Briefe aus der Schweiz	1779	1796
Gesang der Geister über den Wassern	1779	1789
Iphigenie auf Tauris. Ein Schauspiel (in prose)	1779	1854
Jery und Bätely. Ein Singspiel	1780	1780
Die Vögel. Nach Aristophanes	1781	1787
Das Neueste von Plundersweilern	1781	1817
Elpenor. Ein Trauerspiel (fragment)	1781	1806
Auf Miedings Tod	1782	1782
Die Fischerin. Ein Singspiel	1782	1782
Ilmenau	1783	1815
Über den Granit	1784	1877
Die Geheimnisse (fragment of an epic)	1784-85	1789
Scherz, List und Rache. Ein Singspiel	1785	1790
Egmont. Ein Trauerspiel	1775-87	1788
Wilhelm Meisters Theatralische Sendung	1777-85	1911
Iphigenie auf Tauris. Schauspiel (final form)	1787	1787
Künstlers Apotheose. Drama	1788	1789
Nausikaa. Ein Trauerspiel (fragment)	1786-87	1827
Torquato Tasso. Schauspiel	1776, 1788-1789	1790
Das römische Carneval	1788	1808
Römische Elegien	1788-89	1795
Faust. Ein Fragment	1775, 1787	1790
Versuch, die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu erklären	1785-86, 1790	1790
Venetianische Epigramme	1790	1796
Schriften (in eight volumes)		1787-90

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III.—1791-1805

Beiträge zur Optik		1791-92
Der Grosskophta. Ein Lustspiel	1791	1792
Reise der Söhne Megaprazons (fragment)	1792	1837
Der Bürgergeneral. Ein Lustspiel	1792	1793
Reineke Fuchs, in zwölf Gesängen	1792-93	1794
Die Aufgeregten. Ein politisches Drama (unfinished)	1793	1817
Das Mädchen von Oberkirch. Ein Trauerspiel (fragment)	1793	1895
Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre	1794-95	1795-96
Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten	1794-95	1795
Das Märchen	1795	1795
Der Zauberflöte zweiter Teil. Dramatisches Märchen (fragment)	1795	1802
Entwurf einer allgemeinen Einleitung in die vergleichende Anatomie	1795-96	1820
Xenien (with Schiller)	1795-96	1797
Benvenuto Cellini. Nach dem Italienischen	1796-97	1796-97
Vier Jahreszeiten	1796	1797
Ballads (Alexis und Dora ; Der neue Pausias ; Der Zauberlehrling ; Der Schatzgräber ; Die Braut von Korinth ; Der Gott und die Bajadere)	1796-97	1797
Hermann und Dorothea	1796-97	1797
Achilleis (fragment)	1797-99	1808
Euphrosyne ; Das Blümlein Wunderschön	1798	1799
Neue Schriften (in seven volumes)		1792-1800
Weissagungen des Bakis	1798	1800
Propyläen. Eine periodische Schrift		1798-1800
Der Sammler und die Seinen	1798-99	1799
Mahomet. Ein Trauerspiel nach Voltaire	1799	1802
Tancred. Ein Trauerspiel nach Voltaire	1800	1802
Paläophron und Neoterpe. Ein Festspiel	1800	1802
Die guten Frauen (Die guten Weiber)	1800	1802
Was wir bringen. Vorspiel	1802	1802
Die natürliche Tochter. Trauerspiel	1799-1803	1803
Rameaus Neffe. Ein Dialog von Diderot	1804	1805
Winkelmann und sein Jahrhundert	1804-05	1805
Epilog zu Schillers Glocke	1805	1805

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IV.—1806-32

Vorspiel zur Eröffnung des Weimarischen Theaters	1807	1816
Faust. Erster Teil	1797-1805	1808
Pandora. Ein Festspiel	1807-08	1808
Sonette	1807-08	1815
Zur Farbenlehre	1801-10	1810
Die Wahlverwandschaften. Ein Roman	1808	1809
Werke (published by Cotta, Tübingen) thirteen volumes		1806-10
Philipp Hackert	1807-11	1811
Shakespeares Romeo und Julia (adaptation)	1811	1841
Die Wette. Lustspiel	1812	1837
Die wandelnde Glocke	1813	1815
Des Epimenides Erwachen	1814	1814
Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit, I-III	1808-14	1811-14
Italienische Reise	1786-88, 1813-17	1816-17
Zweiter römischer Aufenthalt	1787-88, 1817-29	1829
Werke (published by Cotta, Tübingen) twenty volumes		1815-19
Prolog zur Eröffnung des Berliner Theaters	1821	1821
Campagne in Frankreich	1792, 1820-21	1822
Belagerung von Mainz	1793, 1821-22	1822
Tag- und Jahreshefte	1819-22	1830
Shakespeare und kein Ende	1815	1826
Westöstlicher Divan	1813-16	1819
Zur Naturwissenschaft überhaupt		1817-24
Trilogie der Leidenschaft	1823-24	1827
Gedichte (collected in the Ausgabe letzter Hand)		1827
Novelle	1826-27	1828
Correspondence with Schiller (1794-1805)		1828-29
Über Kunst und Altertum. Six volumes		1816-32
Zahme Xenien		1820-21, 1827
Maximen und Reflexionen		1833
Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre, Vol. II	1827-28	1833

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Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und · Wahrheit. Vol. IV	1824-31	1833
Faust. Zweiter Teil	1800-32	1833
Werke. Vollständige Ausgabe letzter Hand (publ. by Cotta, Tübingen)		
Forty volumes		1827-30
Nachgelassene Werke (publ. by Cotta, Tübingen). Twenty volumes		1832-42

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Goethe surely trails behind him a vaster literature of biography, criticism and commentary than any other man in the history of letters. The great *Grundriss zur Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, founded by Karl Goedeke, devotes in its third edition—of which the volumes dealing with Goethe were published between 1910 and 1913—more than fifteen hundred pages to the bibliography of the poet and his works alone. The brief list of works which I append to the present volume is thus only the merest outline of a bibliography: a first practical guide to the reader, who seeks information especially concerning recent publications.

I.—*Works. Collected Editions*

The standard edition of Goethe's Works is: *Goethes Werke*. Herausgegeben im Auftrage der Grossherzogin Sophie von Sachsen. Weimar, 1888-1919. This edition is in four divisions: I. *Werke*. 55 volumes. II. *Naturwissenschaftliche Werke*. 13 volumes. III. *Tagebücher*. 14 volumes. IV. *Briefe*. 50 volumes. Each division is provided with an exemplary index.

Apart from this monumental edition, there are, of course, very many others, which, when they aim at completeness, usually number 40 volumes. I mention the *Jubiläums-Ausgabe*, issued by Goethe's old publisher,

Cotta, Stuttgart, 1902-7 ; that based on the old Hempel Edition in the *Goldene Klassiker-Bibliothek*, Berlin, 1909 ff. ; and the *Propyläen-Ausgabe*, published by G. Müller, Munich, 1909ff. The edition of the Bibliographische Institut, Leipzig, is at present being re-issued under the general editorship of R. Petsch. Editions of selected works are even more numerous. That edited by Erich Schmidt for the Goethe-Gesellschaft in six volumes in 1909-10, has been recently republished, Weimar, 1926.

II. *Letters.*

Goethe's Letters are to be found complete in the Weimar edition. Editions of selected letters have been published by E. von der Hellen, 5 volumes, Stuttgart, 1901-13, and Ph. Stein, 8 volumes, Berlin, 1901-24. Of collections of Goethe's correspondence with his friends the more important are : with Schiller, originally published by Goethe himself, edited by H. G. Gräf and A. Leitzmann, Leipzig, 1913 ; his letters to Charlotte von Stein, edited by J. Wahle, 3 volumes, Leipzig, 1899-1900 ; and by J. Petersen, 3 volumes, Leipzig, 1923 ; his correspondence with Bettina von Arnim, edited by R. Steig, Leipzig, 1922 ; with Duke Karl August, edited by H. Wahl, 2 volumes, Berlin, 1915-18 ; with Christiane, edited by H. G. Gräf, Frankfurt, 1923 ; with Carlyle, Berlin, 1887 ; with Zelter, 6 volumes, Berlin, 1833-34. Also in the *Schriften der Goethe-Gesellschaft : Goethe und die Romantik*, edited by C. Schüddekopf and O. Walzel, 2 volumes, Weimar, 1898-99 ; *Goethe und Lavater*, edited by H. Funck, Weimar, 1901 ; and *Goethe und Österreich*, edited by A. Sauer, 2 volumes,

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Weimar, 1902-4. As a supplement to the *Propyläen-Ausgabe : Goethe als Persönlichkeit : Berichte und Briefe von Zeitgenossen*, edited by H. Amelung, Munich, 1924ff.

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III. *Conversations*

Goethe's Conversations have been collected by W. von Biedermann, 11 volumes, Leipzig, 1889-91 ; 2nd ed. in 5 volumes, 1909-11. Of the individual collections that with Eckermann is, of course, the most important. Latest edition by H. H. Houben, Leipzig, 1926 ; cp. J. Petersen, *Die Entstehung der Eckermannschen Gespräche und ihre Glaubwürdigkeit*, Frankfurt, 1926. Eckermann's work was translated into English by J. Oxenford, London, 1850.

IV. *Biographies*

The first important Biography of Goethe was by George Henry Lewes, London, 1855 (now obtainable in the *Everyman's Library*), which enjoyed a long popularity both in Germany and England. Further : H. Grimm, *Goethe Vorlesungen*, 2 volumes, Berlin, 1877 ; 7th ed., 1903 (English translation by S. H. Adams,

Boston, 1880); H. Düntzer, *Goethes Leben*, Leipzig, 1880; 2nd ed., 1883 (English translation by T. W. Lyster, London, 1883); A. Baumgartner, *Goethe : sein Leben und seine Werke*, 3 volumes, Freiburg, 1885-6; 4th ed., 2 volumes, 1923-5; A. Bielschowsky, *Goethe : sein Leben und seine Werke*, 2 volumes, Munich, 1896-1903; 30th ed., 1916 (English translation by W. A. Cooper, 3 volumes, New York, 1905-8); K. Heine-mann, *Goethe*, Leipzig, 1895; 3rd ed., 1916; R. M. Meyer, *Goethe*, Berlin, 1895; F. Gundolf, *Goethe*, Berlin, 1916; 12th ed., 1925; Georg Brandes, *Goethe* (German translation), Berlin, 1922; E. Ludwig, *Goethe: Geschichte eines Menschen*, Stuttgart, 1920-21; latest ed., 1926; P. Hume Brown, *Life of Goethe*, 2 volumes, London, 1920; W. Bode, *Goethes Leben*, 8 volumes and continued, Berlin, 1917.

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APPENDIX

TRANSLATIONS OF PASSAGES QUOTED IN THE TEXT

For the benefit of readers who may be unfamiliar with German I append translations of the passages in verse quoted in the body of the present volume. They are drawn from accredited English versions of Goethe's works ; but I have occasionally made alterations in the direction of greater literalness, even when my changes diminish such claim as the translations may have to be accepted as equivalent English verse.

Page 23 (*Heidenröslein*) :

Once a boy a rose espied,
A rosebud fair and tender,
It was so young and full of pride,
Quickly to the spot he hied,
Saw it in all its splendour.
Rosebud, rosebud, rosebud red,
Rosebud fair and tender !

Page 28 (*Willkommen und Abschied*) :

My heart beat fast—to horse, haste, haste !
Away, wild as a warrior to the fight ;
The evening soon the earth embraced,
And on the mountains hung the night.

Soon stood in robes of mist the oak,
 A towering giant in his size,
 When darkness from the thicket broke,
 And glared with hundred gloomy eyes.

From out a hill of clouds the moon
 With mournful, troubled gleam did peer ;
 The winds their soft wings fluttered soon,
 And moaned and murmured in my ear ;
 The night a thousand monsters framed,
 Yet fresh and joyous was my mind ;
 What fire within my veins then flamed !
 What glow was in my bosom shrined ! . . .

How sad, how painful was our parting !
 Thy weeping eyes revealed thy heart.
 And in thy kisses what a rapture !
 Oh, what delight, what bitter smart !
 Thou went'st—my gaze to earth first roved—
 I followed thee with tearful eye :
 And yet, what rapture to be loved !
 To love, ye gods, what ecstasy !

Pages 28, 29 (*Mailed*) :

How fair doth Nature
 Appear to me !
 How bright the sunshine !
 How smiles the lea !

The blossoms are bursting
 On all branches now,
 And a thousand voices
 Ring from every bough.

GOETHE

And joy and gladness
Fill every breast :
Oh earth ! oh sunshine !
Oh rapture blest !

Oh love ! oh loved one !
As golden bright,
As clouds of morning
On yonder height !

Thou blassest gladly
The smiling field—
The world in fragrant
Vapour concealed.

Oh maiden, maiden,
How love I thee !
Thine eye, how it kindles !
How lovest thou me!

Page 32 (*Faust*, I, ll. 2038-9) :

My worthy friend, gray are all theories,
And green alone life's golden tree.

Pages 52 (*Faust*, I, ll. 3432-58) :

Who dare name Him ?
And who confess :
I believe in Him ?
Who can feel
And dare to say :
I believe in Him not ?
The All-enfolding,

The All-sustaining,
 Folds He and sustains He not
 Thee, me, Himself ?
 Arches not the sky above us ?
 Lies not beneath us firm the earth ?
 And rise not with kindly gleam
 The everlasting stars ?
 Look we not into each other's eyes,
 And dost thou not feel it all
 Thronging to head and heart,
 Weaving its mystery eternal,
 Invisible, visible, around thee ?
 Vast as it is, fill thence thy heart
 And when thou'rt in this feeling wholly blest,
 Then call it what thou wilt,
 Call it bliss ! heart ! love ! God !
 I have no name for it !
 Feeling is everything :
 A name is but sound and smoke,
 Shrouding the glow of Heaven.

Page 53 (*Diné zu Coblenz*) :

And so, as to Emmaus once of yore,
 We walked with fiery steps and soul,
 A prophet right, a prophet left,
 The world-child in the middle.

Page 57 (*An Belinden*) :

Wherefore drag me to yon garish pleasure
 And pomp of light ?
 Was I not happy in abundant measure,
 In the silent night ?

GOETHE

Shut in my chamber when the moon was gleaming,
Unseen I lay,
And with its trembling radiance round me streaming
I dreamed away.

I dreamed of hours with golden joy o'erflowing,
And I was blest ;
For thee, my loved one, love was warmly glowing
Within my breast.

Can it be I thou bendest to thy fancies,
Cards in my hand,
While round us with insufferable glances
The company stand ?

Not sweetest flowers of spring can in my blindness
Charm now my view.
Where thou, my angel, art, are love and kindness,
And nature too.

Page 59 (*An Lili*) :

In gentle vales, on mountains snowy white
I from thy image could not part !
It hovered near in clouds of light,
It lay within my heart.
Learn here how with compelling might
One heart the other fires,
And how in vain love seeketh flight
From love that it inspires.

Page 60 (*Prometheus*) :

Curtain thy heavens, Zeus,
With clouds and mist,

And like a boy that moweth
 Thistles down,
 Disport with oaks and mountain-peaks.
 Yet thou must leave
 My earth to me,
 My cottage, too, thou hast not built,
 And my hearth
 Whose kindly glow
 Thou enviest me !

I honour thee ? And why ?
 Hast thou e'er lightened the sorrows
 Of the heavy-laden ?
 Hast thou stilled the tears
 Of the anguish-stricken ?
 Hath not almighty Time
 Fashioned me to a man,
 And eternal Fate,
 My masters and thine ?

Didst thou e'er fancy
 I should hate life,
 Fly to the wilds,
 Because not all
 My blossom-dreams bore fruit ?

Here sit I forming mortals
 After my image,
 A race resembling me,
 To suffer and to weep,
 To enjoy and to be glad,
 And show no heed to thee,
 As I !

Page 73 (*Torquato Tasso*, Act II, sc. i, ll. 928-32)

But do not think
That freedom's lawless impulse swells my breast.
Man is not born for freedom, and a noble
Mind can know no higher fortune than to serve
A prince deserving honour.

Page 75 (*Gesang der Geister über den Wassern*) :

The soul of man
Resembleth water ;
From heaven it cometh,
To heaven it riseth,
And then again,
To earth descendeth,
Changing ever.

Page 78 (*An Frau von Stein*) :

Thou knewest every fibre in my being,
Guessed what each tremor of my nerves might mean,
Couldst read my very soul and, seeing,
Pierce where no mortal eye had ever seen.
Into my fiery blood contentment pouring,
Hast to my mad career brought rest,
And in thy angel arms, trust restoring,
Hast given new vigour to my troubled breast.

Pages 82, 83 (*An den Mond*) :

Bush and vale thou fill'st again
With thy phantom light,
And my soul thou settest free
With thy mystic might.

Thou dost o'er my field extend
 Thy sweet soothing eye,
 Watching like a gentle friend
 O'er my destiny. . . .

He who from the world retires,
 Void of hate is blest ;
 Who a friend's true love inspires,
 Rejoicing on his breast.

That which mortals never knew,
 Or ne'er thought aright,
 Through the bosom's labyrinth
 Wanders in the night.

Page 83 (*Wandrer's Nachtlied*) :

On all the hills
 Is peace,
 In all the tree-tops
 Thou canst hardly trace
 A breath ;
 The birds are silent in the woodland.
 Wait only, soon
 Thou too art at rest.

Page 91 (*Mignon*) :

Knowst thou the land where the pale citron blows,
 And the gold orange midst dark foliage glows ?
 A soft wind greets us from the azure skies,
 Where silent myrtles, stately laurels rise.
 Knowst thou it well ?

GOETHE

Oh, thither with thee !

Oh, that I might, my own beloved one, flee !

Knowst thou the house ? On pillars rest its beams,
Bright is its hall, in light a chamber gleams,
And marble statues stand, and gaze on me :
What have they done, thou hapless child, to thee ?
Knowst thou it well ?

Oh, thither with thee !

Oh, that I might, my loved protector, flee ?

Knowst thou the path that o'er the mountain goes,
Where the mule threads its way through mist and snows,
Where dwelt in caves the dragon's ancient brood,
Topples the crag, and o'er it roars the flood.
Knowst thou it well ?

Oh, come with me !

There lies our way, oh, father, let us flee !

Pages 109, 110 (*Iphigenie auf Tauris*, Act II, sc. ii,
iii, ll. 1266-80 ; 1355-64) :

What whispering sounds pervade the dreary grove ?
What hollow murmurs haunt its twilight gloom ?
They gather round to view the stranger guest !
Who are yon troop in high communion met,
Like an assembled family of princes ?
They mingle peacefully, of every age,
And either sex, yet are their godlike forms
Cast in a kindred mould. 'Tis they, 'tis they,
The fathers of my race ! With Atreus,
In friendly converse glides Thyestes' shade,
And children playfully around them sport.
Is there no enmity among you now ?

And is revenge extinguished with the sun ?
 I then am welcome, and may hope to join
 Your solemn company. . . .

Oh, let me too within my sister's arms,
 And on the bosom of my friend, enjoy
 With grateful thanks the bliss ye now bestow.
 My heart assures me that your curses cease.
 The dread Eumenides at length retire,
 The brazen gates of Tartarus I hear
 Behind them closing with a thundering clang.
 A quickening odour from the earth ascends,
 Inviting me to chase, upon its plains,
 The joys of life and deeds of high emprise.

Pages 112, 113 (*Torquato Tasso*, Act III, sc. iv,
 ll. 2112-4 ; Act. V, sc. v, ll. 3432-53).

That he may know
 More happiness himself, and be a source
 Of purer joy to others. . . .

Though in their mortal anguish men are dumb,
 To me a god hath given to tell my grief. . . .

Oh, noble friend, thou standest firm and calm,
 While I am like the tempest-driven wave,
 But be not boastful of thy strength. Reflect !
 Nature, whose mighty power hath fixed the rock,
 Gives to the wave its strength and motion.
 She sends her storm, the passive wave is driven,
 And rolls and swells, and falls in billowy foam.
 Yet in this very wave the glorious sun
 Mirrors his splendour, and the quiet stars

GOETHE

Upon its heaving bosom gently rest.
Dimmed is the splendour, vanished is the calm !
In danger's hour I know myself no longer,
Nor am I now ashamed of the confession.
The helm is broken, and on every side
The reeling vessel splits. The riven planks,
Bursting asunder, yawn beneath my feet !
Thus with my outstretched arms I cling to thee !
So doth the shipwrecked mariner at last
Cling to the rock that was to be his doom.

Pages 114, 115 (*Römische Elegien*, VII, ll. 1-14).

Oh, what happiness feel I in Rome ! When I think of
the times

When a gloomy day back in the north held me in thrall.
Dark was the sky, and heavy it weighed on my spirit.

Colourless, formless, the world lay weary and dead,
And I in deep dejection, my bosom troubled and weary,
Sought light in confusion ; sought my dark way to
trace.

Now I rejoice in the glow of an ether clearer and finer.

Phoebus the god brings to light new colours and forms.
Starlit the night, which re-echoes with ravishing singing,
And the moon gleameth brighter than erst in northern
skies.

What blessedness know I ! I a mere mortal ! Do I
dream ?

Or doth thy ambrosial house, Father Jove, welcome thy
guest ?

Ah, at thy knees lie I and stretch, imploring, beseeching,
My hands to thee, Jupiter Xenius ! Hear, I beg thee
my prayer !

Page 120 (*Gefunden*) :

Once through the forest
 Alone I went ;
 To seek for nothing
 Was my intent.

I saw in the shadow
 A floweret rare,
 As a star it glistened,
 As eyes 'twas fair.

I sought to pluck it,
 It gently said,
 "Shall I be gathered,
 Only to fade ? "

With all its roots
 I dug it with care,
 And took it home
 To my garden fair.

In a quiet corner
 Soon it was set,
 And there it grows
 And blossoms yet.

Pages 125, 127 (*Venetianische Epigramme*, Nos. iv, xcvi, xxxiv) :

Fair is the land, but ah ! Faustina find I no longer,
 This is not Italy more, the land that I left with such
 sadness.

GOETHE

In the south are treasures in plenty ! But away in the
north

Draws me a magnet much stronger irresistibly back-
wards.

Small 'midst the princes of Germany is truly my sovereign.

Short and narrow his land, little good can he do.

But let everyone put to good purpose the forces within
him

And without ; then were it a joy a German 'mid
Germans to be.

But why praisest thou him whom active achievements
proclaim ?

Nay, thy reverence, mayhap, may seem as if bought by
a bribe.

For me he hath given what great lords seldom bestow,
Affections and trust, leisure, acres, and garden and
house.

Only him can I thank for them, I, who, needy and poor,

A poet unable to turn his poor talents to money.

Europe hath praised me ; but what owe I to Europe ?

But as nothing. My poems have been heavily paid
for.

Germany followed my footsteps, and France was willing
to learn.

England ! Kind was the welcome thou gavest the
poet.

But what boots it to me that even in China

They are painting deftly on glass my Werther and
Lotte ?

No emperor has given me a thought ; no king ever

Favoured me. My Augustus, Maecenas, he was in
one.

Pages 149, 150 (*Hermann und Dorothea*, VI, ll. 3-19 ; 76-80).

Not short are our sufferings ;
 For we have drunk the bitters of many a long year together,
 All the more grievous, because our fair hopes have been
 blighted.
 For who can deny that his heart beat wildly and high in
 his bosom,
 And that with purer pulses his breast more freely was
 throbbing,
 When the new-born sun first rose in the whole of its glory,
 When we heard of the right of men to have all things in
 common,
 Heard of noble equality, and of inspiring freedom ?
 Each man then hoped to attain new life for himself, and
 the fetters
 Which had encircled many a land appeared to be broken,
 Fetters held by the hands of sloth and selfish indulgence.
 Did not all nations turn their gaze, in those days of emo-
 tion,
 Towards the world's capital, which so many a long year
 had been so,
 And now more than ever deserved so glorious a title ?
 Were not the men who first proclaimed so noble a message,
 Names that are worthy to rank with the highest the stars
 ever shone on,
 Did not each give to mankind his courage and genius and
 language ?

May I never again see men in such wretched confusion !
 Even the raging wild beast is a better object to gaze on.
 Ne'er let them speak of freedom, as if themselves they
 could govern !

GOETHE

All the evil which law has driven far back in the corner
Seems to escape, as soon as the fetters which bound it are
loosened.

Page 155 (*Epilog zu Schillers Glocke*) :

For he was ours ! Oh, may this word so blest
O'ercome our aching pain with mighty sound.
He sought with us a haven and a rest
After sore storms : here calm he found.
Meanwhile his mighty spirit onward pressed,
Sought goodness, beauty, truth in their full round,
And far behind in unsubstantial shadow lay
Convention's realm which o'er us all holds sway.

Page 168 (*Pandora*, ll. 1081-6) :

Well aware are ye mortals what is to wish for,
What may be granted the gods alone know.
Your beginnings, ye Titans, are mighty ; but to guide
To the good everlasting and beauty undying
Is the work of the gods. Leave them to complete it !

Pages 171, 174 (*Faust, Erster Teil. Prolog im Himmel*, ll. 309-17 ; 324-9 ; *Studierzimmer*, ll. 1692-1706) :

Mephistopheles.

Forsooth ! He serves Thee after strange devices ;
No earthly meat or drink the fool suffices ;
An inward ferment driveth him afar ;
Half-conscious of his madness and unrest,
From heaven demandeth he the fairest star,

From earth the highest raptures and the best,
 And all that's near and all that's far
 Fail to subdue the tumult of his breast.

The Lord.

Though still confused his service unto Me,
 I soon shall lead him to a light more clear.
 Sees not the gardener, even while buds his tree,
 Both flower and fruit adorn the coming year ?

Mephistopheles.

What wilt Thou wager ? Thou must lose indeed !
 If leave to me Thou wilt but give,
 Him gently upon my road to lead !

The Lord.

As long as he on earth shall live,
 So long 'tis not forbidden thee.
 Man ever errs, when he doth strive. . . .

Divide this spirit from his fountain-head ;
 To trap him let thy snares be planted,
 Let him, with thee, be downward led ;
 Then stand abashed, when thou art forced to say :
 A good man in his darkest aspiration,
 Has still an instinct of the one true way. . . .

When on an idler's bed I lay myself at ease,
 Then let my life that instant cease !
 Canst thou with lying flattery rule me,
 Until self-pleased, myself I see,
 Canst thou with luring pleasures fool me,
 Let that day be the last for me !
 Be that my wager !
 When to the moment I shall say :

GOETHE

“ Linger awhile ! Thou art so fair ! ”
Then bind me in thy bonds straightway.
My ruin mayst thou then declare !
Then let the bell my end betoken,
Then art thou from thy service free !
The clock may stop, its hand be broken,
And time for ever cease for me !

Page 185 (*Den 6. Juni, 1816*) :

To shine through the dark clouds in vain
Thou attemptest, oh, sun !
My whole life hath only one gain :
To weep for her loss.

Pages 187, 190 (*Westöstlicher Divan, I, Hegire ; VIII, Suleika*) :

North and West and South up-breaking !
Thrones are shattering, empires quaking ;
Fly thou to the untroubled East,
There the patriarch's air to taste !
What with love and wine and song
Chiser's fount will make thee young.

People, slave and conqueror,
All when they are asked, confess
Solely in the personal
Lies man's highest happiness.

Pages 206, 209-10, 212 (*Faust, Zweiter Teil, Act I, ll. 4679-85 ; Act V, ll. 11433-52 ; 11573-85 ; 12104-11*) :

Life's pulses now with fresher forces waken
To greet the mild ethereal twilight o'er me ;

APPENDIX

This night, thou Earth, hast also stood unshaken,
And now thou breathest new-refreshed before me,
And now with gladness fillest my soul again,
With mighty resolution dost inspire me,
Ever towards the highest life to strain. . . .

I have only hurried through the world ;
Each pleasure have I seized as by the hair ;
What not sufficed me, I let it fare,
And what escaped me, I let go.
I've only craved, accomplished, craved again.
Thus through my life I've stormed with might and
main,
Once with mighty passion, intense, complete,
But now with greater wisdom, more discreet.
The narrow round of earth is known enough to me ;
The view beyond is barred immutably ;
A fool who there his blinking eyes directeth,
And o'er the clouds a race like his expecteth !
Firm let him stand, and look around him well !
This world means something to the capable.
Why needs he through eternity to wend ?
Here has he all that he can apprehend.
So let him wander through his earthly day ;
When spirits haunt, go forward on his way ;
In moving onwards, bliss and torment find,
Though, every moment, with unsated mind !

Yes, to this thought I hold with firm persistence ;
Wisdom's last fruit, profoundly true :
He only earns his freedom and existence,
Who daily conquers them anew.
Thus here by dangers girt, shall glide away

GOETHE

Of childhood, manhood, age, the vigorous day ;
And such a throng I fain would see,
Stand on free soil among a people free !
Then dared I hail the moment fleeing :
“ Linger awhile ! Thou art so fair ! ”
The traces cannot, of mine earthly being,
In aeons perish !
In the presentiment of such high bliss,
The highest moment I enjoy !—this !

All things transitory,
But as symbols are sent ;
Earth's insufficiency
Here grows to event ;
The indescribable,
Here it is done ;
The woman-soul leadeth us
Upward and on !

Pages 219, 220 (*Faust, Erster Teil. Vor dem Tor*,
ll. 1112-17).

Two souls, alas ! are lodged within my breast,
And each instinctively repels the other.
One with tenacious organs clings in lust
To this poor world, its coarse desires,
The other spurns with mighty sweep the dust,
And seeks a bourne with our high sires.

Page 223 (*Faust, Zweiter Teil*, ll. 11499-500) :

Deeper and deeper night is round me sinking ;
Only within me shines a radiant light.

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